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Writing Narration

Narration is one of the most powerful ways of communicating with others. A well-written story lets your readers respond to some event in your life as if it were their own. They not only understand the event, but they can almost *feel* it. The action, details, and dialogue put the readers in the scene and make it happen for them.

Moreover, because narration often engages readers' emotions so powerfully, it can play a large role in other types of writing. A strong narrative paragraph can support a persuasive argument or illustrate an explanation or a report. It gives life to your ideas.

This chapter will help you to write a strong narrative by

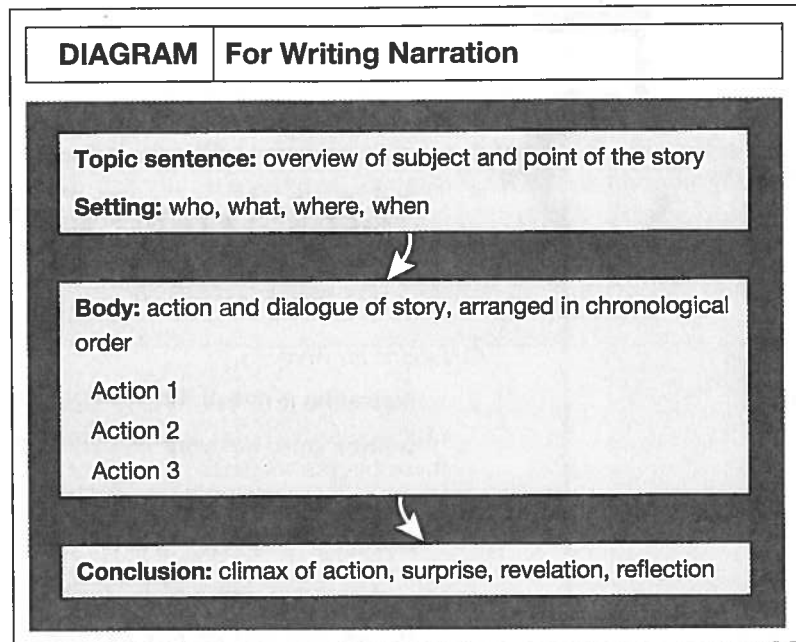
- examining a model of narration
- analyzing what makes a narration effective
- thinking through ways to organize a narration
- giving you practice writing narrations

A Model of Narration

Narration is telling a story. And to be interesting, a good story must have interesting content. It should tell about an event your audience would find engaging. You might even think of your narrative as a movie in which readers see people in action and hear them speak. Therefore, it should be detailed and clear, with events arranged in the order in which they happened or in some other effective way. You should aim for a narrative that achieves all of the following goals:

1. It's unified, with all the action developing a central idea.
2. It's interesting; it draws the readers into the action and makes them feel as if they're observing and listening to the events.
3. It introduces the **four Ws** of a setting—*who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*—within the context of the action.
4. It's coherent; transitions indicate changes in time, location, and characters.
5. It begins at the beginning and ends at the end. That is, the narrative follows a **chronological order**—with events happening in a time sequence.
6. It builds toward a **climax**. This is the moment of most tension or surprise—a time when the ending is revealed or the importance of events becomes clear.

A diagram of such a paragraph on narration might look something like the one on page 53.



The following narration is taken from James McBride's *The Color of Water*, the remarkable story about his white mother, who raised twelve black children in New York—all of whom received college degrees and became highly successful adults. In the four-paragraph excerpt you're about to read, young James is fourteen years old, and his stepfather, Hunter Jordan, has just had a stroke. As you read the excerpt, notice how the four Ws of setting are introduced within the context of the action. Notice the specific detail. And notice how McBride handles the conversations between the characters.

Excerpt from *The Color of Water*

James McBride

- 1 [Daddy] came home from the hospital about a week later and seemed to get better. His speech, though slurred, returned. He sat in his basement headquarters, recuperating, while we crept around the house and Mommy walked about silently, eyes still red-rimmed, on edge. One day he summoned me downstairs and asked me to help him dress. "I want to take a drive," he said. I was the oldest kid living at home by then, my other siblings being away at school. He put on his sweater, wool pants, hat, and blue peacoat. Though ill and thin, he still looked sharp. Slowly, he mounted the stairs and stepped outside. It was May and brisk, almost cold outside. We went into the garage and stepped into his gold-colored Pontiac. "I want to drive home one more time," he said. He was talking about Richmond, Virginia, where he grew up. But he was too weak to drive, so he sat there behind the wheel of the car, staring at the garage wall, and he began to talk.
- 2 He said he had a little money saved up for Mommy and a little land in Virginia, but it was not enough. He said that since I was the oldest living at home, I had to watch out for Mommy and my little brothers and sisters because "y'all are special," he said. "And just so special to me." It was the only time I ever heard him refer to race in any way, however vaguely, but it didn't matter, because right then and there I knew he was going to die and I had to blink back my tears. I wanted to tell him that I loved him, that I hoped with all my heart that he would get better, but I could not formulate the words in my mouth. We had never spoken that way to one another. We joked and talked, but

his chief concern had always been my "schoolin" and "church raising" as he called it. He was not a man for dialogue. That was Mommy's job.

3 Two days later he suffered a relapse. An ambulance came and got him. About four in the morning the phone rang. My sister Kathy and I lay upstairs and listened, and through what seemed to be a fog, I heard my older brother Richie telling Mommy, "It's all right, Ma. It's all right."

4 "It's not all right! It's not all right!" Ma cried, and she wailed and wailed, the sound of her cries circling the house like a spirit and settling on all the corridors and beds where we lay, weeping in silence.

Questions for Analysis

1. Look for the four Ws. Where and when does the action take place? What month was it? What are the names of the people in the story? How are these people related?
2. The story moves chronologically through several "scenes." Number each scene in the left-hand margin. Then underline the transitional phrases that show the chronological progression of the action.
3. Movement between scenes often involves more than a change in the time of the action. It also includes changes in location or participants in the action. Circle the transitions that show changes in location or participants. Look especially at the beginning of each paragraph.
4. McBride handles dialogue in two ways: by quoting and by indirectly reporting what people say. Where does he place the beginning and end quotation marks? How are the words in the quotations capitalized? How are the words identifying the speaker punctuated and capitalized?
5. How does this story build toward a climax? What is the climax? Where is it first hinted at?

The Process of Writing a Narrative

Even if we think our own lives have not been dramatic, tragic, or funny, all of us still have personal stories worth telling. Write a paragraph, or more than one paragraph, about an event that affected you greatly and would probably interest your classmates. Your main purpose will be to entertain, but you may also wish to make a larger point about a lesson in life.

If you have trouble describing the event, try a "first": your first day at school, your first date, your first job, the first time you drove a car, or the birth of your first child.

Generating the Materials

If you choose too large a story to tell, one of two problems might result.

1. You'll find yourself writing a book.
2. You'll write a short paragraph filled with generalizations because you can't possibly develop each one.

You should therefore begin by choosing a story that is small enough for you to tell in one or more paragraphs. Start by listing three, four, or more details that occur to you. If possible, consider the point your story will make. That will help you decide which details to include. For example, don't describe your uncle and

aunt's little store if that information doesn't develop the point of the story. But if you want to emphasize how your uncle and aunt suffered when the store burned down, then take your readers on a short tour of the store.

Specific details create the realism and drama of a story. And often the best details include dialogue. The words people speak in a story often create more of a sense of realism than their actions. So consider whether to quote the speech of someone and the response that follows.

Explore your topic through freewriting or brainstorming, and then arrange your ideas chronologically. A revised brainstorming list about a first day at school, arranged in chronological order, might look like this:

Arrived at school, holding Mom's hand
 Met lady who said she was my teacher
 Cried when Mom told me good-bye
 "Mom, please don't leave me," I said.
 Ran after her, but teacher stopped me
 Told me that I would meet many new friends
 Led me into a classroom filled with toys, bright posters on the walls, desks,
 and chairs
 Became interested in everything
 Maybe school wouldn't be too bad

Writing the First Draft

Now write a first draft of the story. Aim to include all of the following elements:

1. A clear, unifying idea. Perhaps you can state that idea as a claim in the topic sentence, such as: "My first day at school was frightening." But the best narratives often omit the topic sentence because it may reveal the climax of the story and detract from the readers' enjoyment. It's OK to begin with a topic sentence, especially if it helps you stick to the unifying idea, but be careful not to spoil things for your readers.
2. Information to establish the setting: *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
3. Enough detail to develop the unifying idea interestingly and clearly.
4. An arrangement of the details in chronological order.
5. A progression to a climax or dramatic conclusion.

If the first draft of your story turns out to be only five to seven sentences long, you're probably summarizing events rather than developing them specifically. Try to generate more details:

- Close your eyes and put yourself back into the experience. What did you do first, next, and then after that? What did other people do, and how did they respond to each other's actions? What did they say? As events enter your mind, write them down quickly so that you capture them. When you revise later, you can eliminate unnecessary details and smooth out your language.
- Be specific. Look for expressions such as *always*, *usually*, *often*, and *sometimes*. These expressions introduce habitual actions—that is, generalizations. Omit them if you can. Then compose sentences beginning with phrases such as *once*, *one day*, *one evening*, or a specific hour or day. These sentences should lead you through a sequence of more specific actions.



TIPS

For Transitions Showing Chronological Order

Say words such as *first*, *second*, *third* or *next*, *then*, *afterward* aloud as you explore the sequence of actions. You don't have to include these words in the paragraph if the sequence is clear, but use them if they add coherence.

Revising the First Draft

Return to the paragraph after a few hours or days and revise it further. Often the best idea that unifies the story won't occur to you until you've written the first draft. In that case, examine the draft carefully and consider how to reshape it. Consider these issues:

1. Should you state the unifying idea of the story at the beginning?
2. Should you eliminate some details because they don't support your unifying idea?
3. Should you add more details and dialogue that develop the unifying idea?

Rewrite the story or parts of the story with those questions in mind. Check and improve your use of dialogue. These are the general rules:

1. Begin and end each quotation with **quotation marks** [""], whether the quotation is a single word, a sentence, or several sentences.
2. Capitalize the first word of the quotation.
3. Use a **speaker tag** such as *he said* or *she asked* after the quotation ends. If the speaker tag follows a statement, end the statement with a comma. If the speaker tag follows a question, end the question with a question mark. But place the end punctuation inside the quotation mark, like this:

," he said.

?" she asked.

4. Begin a new paragraph each time you change speakers.

Finally, work on clarifying your ideas and improving coherence. Let the following checklist guide you in revising your paragraph. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. Make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the paragraph.

See Chapter 29 for help in how to use quotations properly.

REVISION CHECKLIST

NARRATION

- Does the story have a clear unifying idea? If not, what could that idea be?
- If the story doesn't include a topic sentence, is the unifying idea of the story clear without it?
- Does the setting cover the four Ws?
- Is the story unified, with all the details contributing to the central idea?
- Is the story arranged chronologically? If not, is the organization of ideas and events still effective?
- Do the transitions show the movement from idea to idea and scene to scene?
- Are there enough details?
- Is there dialogue at important moments?
- Is there a climax to the story—a moment at which the action is resolved or a key idea is revealed?

YES NO

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Take notes of these responses to guide your revision. Pay special attention to word choice, clarity, and the use of dialogue.

Further Revising and Editing

Review and revise your story again. Then edit and proofread, checking for misspelled words, words accidentally left out (or left in—especially if you’ve composed and revised your paper on a computer), and any other errors you notice. Be sure questions are correctly punctuated. Hand in a clean copy of your work.

Additional Writing Assignment 1: Tell a Family Story

When many families get together for yearly holidays or special occasions, they hear the same stories repeated. Write about one of these legends from your family, especially if it’s funny. (You may wish to write a story of perhaps four or five paragraphs in length.)

Assume that your audience is a group of people who don’t know you, and shape the story so it reveals something important about your family or one of its members. If you can’t recall a family legend, write a story about a pleasant or amusing event from your childhood, perhaps one that you’ll pass on as a legend to the next generation. Assume again that your primary purpose is to entertain. At the beginning or end of the story, make the unifying idea of the story clear.

A Student Model Essay

Bozena Budżyńska was born and educated in Poland (and elsewhere, as you’ll see) before becoming a student at Truman College in Chicago. As you read her story, pay attention to the opening sentence, which serves as the thesis statement; it hints at what is going to happen without revealing the specific events. Notice how the story introduces information about the setting (who, when, what, and where) as the action unfolds. Notice, too, how dialogue carries much of the narrative. And notice how small details near the beginning of the story become important at the end.

The Time of Living Dangerously

Bozena Budżyńska

* * * *

- 1 The love of photography can be a dangerous affair. So I found out one beautiful day in the tiny West African village.
- 2 Visiting Ghana as a college exchange student, I met, among other international students, Lisa from Norway. We liked each other instantly and became friends. I enjoyed her wicked sense of humor, adventurous nature, and easygoing personality. We shared a room at the Accra campus and many days full of local delights as well as evenings full of laughter. We also shared an interest in photography. She had her always-working Canon; I had my temperamental Zenith, a Russian camera, which became the theme of many jokes.
- 3 One day, encouraged after an interesting and relatively trouble-free trip to Togo, we decided to hitchhike through Ghana. Our backpacks ready, cameras loaded, and spirits excited, we said good-bye to our fellow students. Two weeks and many beautiful memories later, we arrived at our destination, a small village in North Ghana just a couple of miles away from Burkina Faso.
- 4 It was supposed to be our last evening before heading back, when we met two teenage boys who told us how easy it is to cross the border to Burkina Faso even without visas. Wanting to experience yet another African country and maybe to impress the students back in Accra, we decided to take the risk.

5 "We will just take couple of photos, look around, and go back the same day," Lisa said, her voice full of excitement.

6 "You will have to take the pictures since my camera is having a bad day," was my response, as if that was the only problem we should worry about.

7 The warm sunshine coming through the window screen woke us up that morning. Aromas of the street-cooked breakfast wafted in. Delicious grilled plantain never tasted so good. All we needed was a drink of coconut juice. We were ready for the day.

8 The road to the border led through woods. The mild wind tingled our bare arms and faces. The ever so colorful African earth painted our shoes red with each step.

9 Two sleepy border patrol guards smiled as we crossed the border and greeted the little boy who followed us from the village on his yellow bike.

10 "I don't even know what language they speak in this country," Lisa said.

11 "We don't even have the right currency of this country," I added, realizing that this was not a well-planned affair.

12 Just then we came upon a tiny village with men dressed in long embroidered shirts and women in colorful skirts.

13 "Oh my, have you ever seen anything like it?" exclaimed Lisa, pointing to an enormous flag posted in the middle of the village square. It was indeed extraordinary in its design and bright patterns.

14 She reached for her camera and started shooting.

15 Suddenly, a tall man with a hat grabbed Lisa's hand and said in English, "Taking pictures is not allowed here!" His voice was harsh and angry.

16 "Let go!" she screamed.

17 "Give me your camera!" he shouted.

18 "Leave me alone!" Lisa yelled louder.

19 They were both wrestling with the camera.

20 Meanwhile, more people gathered around us, their voices and their faces clearly showing us that we were not welcome there.

21 "They come here to take pictures and later to laugh at us," someone said loudly.

22 "Take the camera away!"

23 "Destroy the film!"

24 I don't like crowds, let alone angry ones, and the situation was getting worse by the minute. "This is dangerous," I thought, realizing that we were no longer in our beloved Ghana with its friendly people. The stories of kidnapped foreigners flashed through my mind. The villagers must have had a bad experience with foreigners to react in such a resentful way.

25 "Just give them the film," I murmured to Lisa.

26 "Over my dead body!"

27 "That might just be, Lisa. Don't be silly."

28 "This is the film with the crocodiles. Don't you understand!"

29 Ah, she mentioned the crocodiles, yet another of our brilliant ideas! We had a local guard let us see the crocodiles up close and feed them chicken. We barely escaped before too many of them came out of the swamp. Lisa snapped a couple of pictures before we had to run.

30 "We will visit them again on our way home and you will take the whole roll." I was trying to be funny.

31 Just then the crowd parted and a serious looking village official approached us. Everyone was trying to explain what was happening.

32 "You must give me the film or I will take you to prison," he demanded.

33 "I am not giving you my film!!!"

34 Prison was more like a mud hut; nevertheless, there we ended up. We could hear the angry crowd outside.

35 "Give me your passports!" the one with the hat demanded.

36 "How do you like your crocodiles now?" I whispered.

- 37 Suddenly there was some commotion outside and voices raised in a local dialect.
Two Ghanaian guards we met earlier that day burst in.
- 38 "You are coming with us!"
- 39 Lisa looked at me and winked. Outside, next to the soldiers' motorbikes stood the
little boy and his yellow bike.
- 40 Safely across the border, and after the lecture from the guards, we kissed the little
boy's cheeks and showered him with treats.
- 41 And no, I don't have the photograph of the crocodiles on my wall. Lisa's camera
and the film were stolen on our way back to the campus. My Zenith, though, is one of
my cherished possessions.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the function of the first two paragraphs of the story? What is the function of the third paragraph?
2. What transitions in the story signal the passage of time or change in location? Underline them.
3. Much of the action and humor of the story are revealed through the dialogue. Look at how the dialogue is handled mechanically: note the punctuation, placement of quotation marks, use of capitalization, paragraphing of dialogue, and identification of the speakers.
4. Notice that in some dialogue, the speakers are not identified. How do you know who is speaking?
5. A lot of the enjoyment and tension in a story comes from oppositions—conflicts, surprises, and contrasts. List some of the most important oppositions.
6. What do the two main characters—Bozena and her friend—have in common? But, more important, how are they different, and how do those differences contribute to your enjoyment of the story?

Additional Writing Assignment 2: Tell a Personal Story

Write about a time when you found yourself in a surprising, unpleasant, or even dangerous situation. Perhaps you had an adventure that would be fun to write about. Establish the circumstances (*who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*) at or near the beginning, and then let the action unfold. You may wish to include a bit of dialogue as Bozena did.

Although your narrative may not be as long as Bozena's, you will probably find that it will need more than a single paragraph.

6

Describing a Scene

Description is a useful tool in many kinds of writing. In narration or storytelling, it creates a sense of realism. In reports or explanations, it clarifies and makes ideas more specific. And in persuasive writing, it can clarify arguments and appeal to the reader's emotions. You can describe many things, including people, but in this chapter we'll practice with one kind of description—of a scene.

A clear and lively description depends on close observation. You must pay attention to what you see and hear, and to specific word choices that will make those observations vivid for your readers. Description also demands that you pay attention to the whole writing process. You'll work on that process in this chapter, by

- examining two models of effective description
- analyzing what makes a paragraph effective
- thinking through ways to organize a paragraph of description
- giving you practice writing descriptions of a scene and a place

Two Models of Description

A **description** of a scene allows your readers to see, hear, or even feel the subject matter clearly. Through careful word choice, strong details, and clear organization, you create a mental picture for your readers. Instead of just *telling* them that a place is pretty, unusual, or horrible, you *show* them the place so that they can see its beauty, uniqueness, or ugliness for themselves.

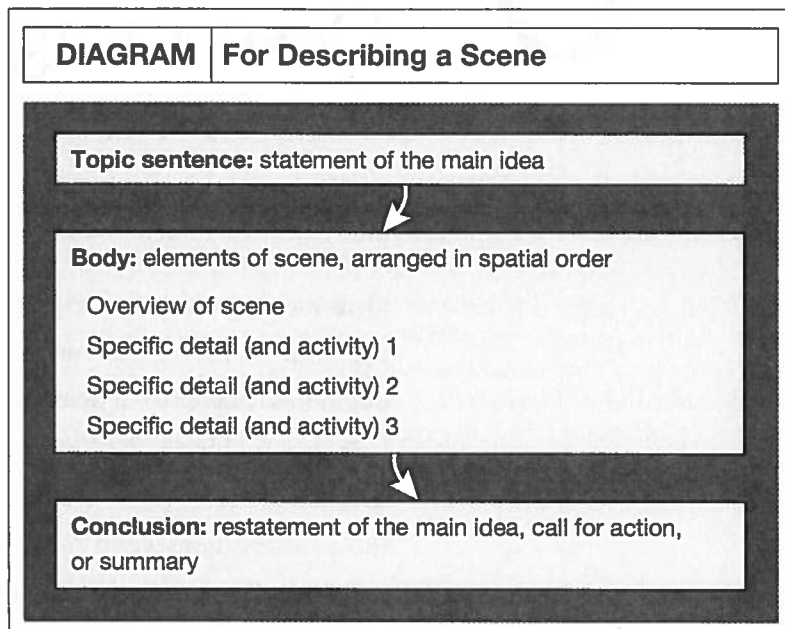
A good description therefore has a unifying idea, and everything you include must support the idea. Sometimes the idea may simply be that the scene is breathtakingly beautiful or ugly. Other times, the idea may be larger and more complex. For example, you might argue that our government should do more to eliminate poverty and back up that claim with a description of poor, homeless children on a street corner.

Some scenes are simply views of a lake, a building, or a room. But most descriptions include the actions of people, animals, or things. The details you provide often call upon several of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and even taste. And those details must be arranged logically so that the description is clear.

One common arrangement is **spatial order**, or arranging details in space in some orderly way. Usually this organization involves presenting an overall visual picture of the scene, then locating the specific details in a consistent pattern:

from top to bottom, right to left, center to sides, or nearest to farthest. And within this spatial organization, there may be movement as people or even animals engage in various activities.

A diagram of a spatially organized descriptive paragraph might include most or all of these elements:



Here's a model paragraph based primarily on firsthand experience and some research to find supporting data. It is a description of the Grand Canyon that is arranged spatially. As you read it, look for the specific details that support the topic sentence.

A View of the Grand Canyon

* * * *

On my visit to Arizona, I saw one of the Earth's greatest natural wonders, the Grand Canyon. It is a massive hole in the ground covering much of the northwestern part of the state. In all, the canyon is over 270 miles in length (although Grand Canyon National Park includes only 100 miles) and between 4 and 18 miles in width. It is also monstrously deep, over a mile in spots, but a visitor can see all the way to the bottom. The walls are far from flat; they are filled with cliffs, ridges, hills, and even valleys. The multi-colored rocks ring the canyon walls in layers, beginning at the top with a sand color, then red, then lavender, then blue-brown, then bright red, and then black at the very bottom. These colors change according to shifts in light; at noon they blend into a bright red, but at sunset they turn dark red and brown. Finally, at the bottom is the Colorado River, which looks like a tiny snake winding through the canyon, although the roar of its current can be heard in places even at the top. In fact, that powerful current has carved out much of the canyon over a 2-billion-year period, and it has left huge towers of rock, like Aztec temples, that rise from the middle of the canyon floor. This massive natural excavation project has also exposed fossils of prehistoric people, dinosaurs, and the earliest forms of plant and animal life that lie within the canyon's walls.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the topic sentence? Underline it. What is the main idea?
2. What sentences provide general information about the canyon?
3. Where are the specific details introduced? How many of the five senses are used in the description?
4. Circle every transitional word that serves to locate things in the canyon. Look carefully at the placement of these words. What kind of spatial organization do they develop—right to left, top to bottom, center to sides?
5. Is there any movement in the description—either in space or in time? If so, why?
6. The end of the paragraph seems to depart from a pure description of the canyon. Why?

Not every description is organized spatially, especially ones that attempt to give an impression of a scene rather than a specific visual picture. These impressions often employ several of the five senses.

The following description is from a novel by the Chinese American author Amy Tan. In the description, the adult narrator recalls her perceptions as a small child exploring what to her was an exciting environment. As you read it, note how many of the five senses it employs.

Excerpt from *The Joy Luck Club*

Amy Tan

- 1 We lived on Waverly Place, in a warm, clean, two-bedroom flat that sat above a small Chinese bakery specializing in steamed pastries and **dim sum**. In the early morning, when the alley was still quiet, I could smell fragrant red beans as they were cooked down to a pasty sweetness. By daybreak, our flat was heavy with the odor of fried sesame balls and sweet curdled chicken crescents. From my bed, I would listen as my father got ready for work, then locked the door behind him, one-two-three clicks.
- 2 At the end of our two-block alley was a small sandlot playground with swings and slides well shined down the middle with use. The play area was bordered by wood-slat benches where old-country people sat cracking roasted watermelon seeds with their golden teeth and scattering the **husks** to an impatient gathering of **gurgling** pigeons. The best playground, however, was the dark alley itself. It was crammed with daily mysteries and adventures. My brothers and I would peer into the medicinal herb shop, watching old Li dole out onto a stiff sheet of white paper the right amount of insect shells, saffron-colored seeds, and **pungent** leaves for his ailing customers. It was said that he once cured a woman dying of an ancestral curse that had **eluded** the best of American doctors. Next to the pharmacy was a printer who specialized in gold-embossed wedding invitations and festive red banners.

dim sum: traditional Chinese food consisting of a variety of small items, including dumplings

husks: shells
gurgling: making low sounds

pungent: strong smelling
eluded: escaped

Questions for Analysis

1. Which of the five senses does Amy Tan use? Why would all of these sensory perceptions be important to a child?
2. Why does Tan listen for her father to leave in the morning?
3. In what order are details in the first paragraph presented? What is the order of the second paragraph?

4. In the second paragraph, Tan takes us into the playground—and beyond. Trace the movement by underlining each place that she enters. What words or phrases establish the locations of the places? Circle them.
5. What point does Tan seem to be making in her description in the second paragraph? Circle the key words that seem to make the point. What kind of physical details involving several of the five sentences support that point?
6. There are a number of specific adjectives regarding color in the description. Underline them.

The Process of Writing a Description

Perhaps you haven't seen the Grand Canyon, but you have been to places that other people might want to visit. Write a paragraph for an advertising booklet that would interest people in visiting your town, your college, or any other place that you find interesting, attractive, or exciting. Describe one area—a pretty, unusual, or lively place, and, if it's relevant, include some description of the typical activity occurring there. Make clear to the audience why this place would be worth visiting.

Gathering the Materials

The best way to gather material for the paragraph is to visit the place for about half an hour. Take notes on what you see and hear—and even smell. Record as much information as possible. You probably won't use it all, but it's better to have more than you need than not enough when you compose the first draft.

The following four questions should guide your note taking:

1. Where is the location? (And what is its name?)
2. What are its dimensions and most important features? Where is each feature—on the right, in the middle, above something else, close, or far away?
3. How large or small are the objects you see? How are they shaped? What are their colors?
4. What are people doing in the scene, and where are they? What do they look like?

Here is an example of the kind of brainstorming notes someone might gather in a half-hour visit to the student center at his or her college:

located on Wright Avenue in the center of the campus
one-story building, modern, lots of glass
hundreds of students inside
pool tables on the north end—six of them
room on the south end with large-screen TV, maybe 50 chairs, busy during soap-opera time
lots of sofas and upholstered chairs
lots of noise

students reading, talking, eating doughnuts, drinking sodas
table-tennis room next to the pool room, four games at once
music room with radio on
a lot of tables in the music room
some card games at the tables
some students on the east side of room sitting in circle talking about an assignment
two or three couples talking, laughing, etc.
a lot of coming and going throughout the center
guys greeting each other
size and shape: a square building, large open area in the center filled with tables, sofas, and chairs
four rooms—one on each end of center: pool and table tennis, music, TV, study areas

Arranging the Materials

Now think about the claim you can make based on the information. Your materials would probably fill more than one paragraph, so you need to *select the most important details that directly support your claim or main idea*. You can accomplish this task in one of two ways—or both of them:

1. Write a topic sentence and then select the materials to develop and support it.
2. Select and arrange material through additional brainstorming, clustering, freewriting, or perhaps an informal outline. Then write the topic sentence.

The final draft of the topic sentence might look like this:

At almost any time of the day, you will find the student center a place where you can relax, meet people, or study in pleasant surroundings.



TIPS

For Transitions Showing Spatial Order

Here are some typical transitions:

on the north side . . .
to the right of the fence . . .
a hundred yards to the west . . .
near the main building . . .
in the middle . . .
farther down . . . and still farther . . .
next to the trees . . .

The rest of the paragraph would probably be organized as follows:

1. A general description of the setting, including its location (and probably the time of the scene)
2. Details that support the topic sentence; in the example above, those details would show what is relaxing and pleasant, as well as how people are meeting each other
3. More specific details about the scene, arranged in a logical order—probably spatial or thematic (that is, supporting the main point or claim)
4. Transitional sentences or phrases that introduce the activities in the scene
5. A description of those activities, including a few specific examples

Writing the First Draft

After arranging your material, write a first draft. Don't assume that your arrangement is final. You'll probably shift around details each time you revise.

Revising the First Draft

Don't revise your first draft immediately. Let it sit for a few hours or even days. Then you can view it with a clear mind and probably with better judgment. Look at the arrangement of details. Is it consistent and clear? Also, look at the beginning of each sentence. Does it relate logically to the previous sentence so that the ideas flow smoothly? If not, consider ways to rearrange the materials and add transitions.

Let the following checklist guide you in revising your paragraph. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the paragraph.

REVISION CHECKLIST

DESCRIPTION

- | | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Does the paragraph include a clear topic sentence that states a claim or main idea? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the paragraph have unity, with all the details contributing to the main idea? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the paragraph employ several of the five senses? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the organization consistent, moving from front to back, left to right, top to bottom, or some other way? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Do transitions show the locations of objects and activities within the scene? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is there a clear transition between the description of the place and the people? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are there enough—or too many—details? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are the nouns and verbs specific? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Take notes of these responses and let them guide your revision.

Further Revising and Editing

Return to your paragraph and revise it again, this time paying special attention to specific details and strong word choice. Then edit and proofread your description, checking for misspelled words, words accidentally left out (or left in—especially if you've composed and revised your paper on a computer), and any other errors you notice. Hand in a clean copy of your work.

8

Describing a Process

When you write a process analysis, you explain how to do something or how something works. This type of writing is especially informative because it tells readers something they want or need to know. A recipe in a cookbook is a process analysis. Instructions for operating DVD players and appliances are process analyses. So are descriptions of how an egg develops into a mature chicken or how an automobile's motor mixes gasoline with air.

This chapter will help you write a process analysis paragraph by

- examining a model of process analysis
- analyzing what makes a process analysis effective
- thinking through ways to organize a process paragraph
- giving you practice writing process analyses

A Model Paragraph of Process Analysis

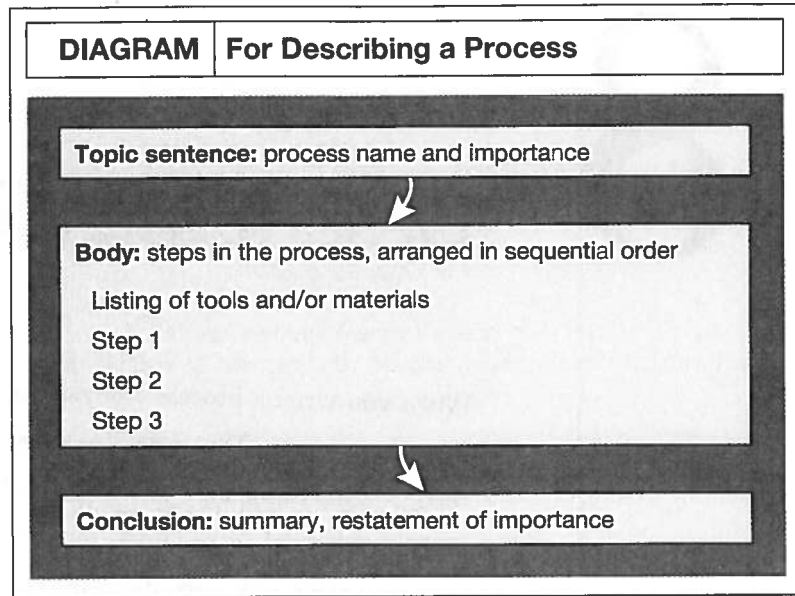
A **process analysis** explains how something works or how to do something. When it explains how something works, it *observes* the process and describes it in the third person. ("The egg begins to hatch in a week.") When it explains how to do something, it *instructs* the reader in imperative sentences. ("Mix the eggs, flour, and milk in a large bowl.")

In either case, your explanation or instructions must be clear. You must consider what readers already know and what they need to know. You must include all the information necessary for them to understand or perform the process. You must define technical terms. You must present the information logically—breaking down the process into a series of steps. And you must label those steps clearly with transitional expressions.

The organization of a process analysis typically includes two parts:

1. An introduction of the process and a list of the materials (tools, parts, or ingredients) that the process requires
2. An explanation of each step in the process, presented in **sequential order**—that is, moving consecutively from first to last—so that readers can visualize the process or perform it themselves

A diagram of a process analysis paragraph is on page 75.



The following example of a process analysis is taken from an article in the "Hers" column of the New York Times in 1984 by Sue Hubbell. Ms. Hubbell, a graduate of Swarthmore College, moved to the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, where she kept bees for twenty-five years. The example describes her experiences in teaching a young man how to tolerate bee stings. Her goal is to help readers understand the process, not perform it.

The Beekeeper Sue Hubbell

* * * *

- 1 The time to harvest honey is summer's end, when it is hot. The temper of the bees requires that we wear protective clothing: a full set of overalls, a zippered bee veil and leather gloves. Even a very strong young man works up a sweat wrapped in a bee suit in the heat, hustling 60-pound **supers** while harassed by angry bees. It is a hard job, harder even than haying, but the jobs are scarce here and I've always been able to hire help.
- 2 This year David, the son of a friend of mine, is working for me. He is big and strong and used to labor, but he was nervous about bees. After we had made the job arrangement I set about desensitizing him to bee stings. I put a piece of ice on his arm to numb it and then, holding a bee carefully by its head, I put it on the numbed spot and let it sting him. A bee stinger is **barbed** and stays in the flesh, pulling loose from the body of the bee as it struggles to free itself. The **bulbous** poison sac at the top of the stinger continues to **pulsate** after the bee has left, pumping the **venom** and forcing the stinger deeper into the flesh.
- 3 That first day I wanted David to have only a partial dose of venom, so after a minute I scraped the stinger out. A few people are seriously sensitive to bee venom; each sting they receive can cause a more severe reaction than the one before—reactions ranging from **hives**, to breathing difficulties, accelerated heart beat and choking to **anaphylactic** shock and death. I didn't think David would be allergic that way, but I wanted to make sure.
- 4 We sat down and had a cup of coffee and I watched him. The spot where the stinger went in grew red and began to swell. That was a normal reaction, and so was the itching that he felt later on.

supers: containers of honey

barbed: hooked
bulbous: round
pulsate: beat
venom: poison

hives: bumps on the skin
anaphylactic: severe, with accelerated heart beat, dramatic drop in blood pressure, and difficulty breathing

- 5 The next day I coaxed a bee into stinging him again, repeating the procedure, but I left the stinger in place for 10 minutes, until the venom sac was empty. Again the spot was red, swollen and itchy but had disappeared in 24 hours. By that time David was ready to catch a bee himself and administer his own sting. He also decided that the ice cube was a bother and gave it up. I told him to keep to one sting a day until he had no redness or swelling and then to increase to two stings. He was ready for them the next day. The great amount of venom caused redness and swelling for a few days, but soon his body could tolerate it without reaction and he increased the number of stings once again.
- 6 Today he told me he was up to six stings. His arms look as though they have track marks on them, but the fresh stings are having little effect. I'll keep him at it until he can tolerate 10 a day with no reaction and then I'll not worry about taking him out to the bee yard.

Questions for Analysis

1. What tools or clothing are needed to perform this process? Why is the process difficult?
2. What is the first main step in the process of desensitizing David to stings? What actions are involved in this step? Why are those actions necessary?
3. What is the second step, and which parts of the actions are different from the ones in the first step? What leads to the next step in the process?
4. At what point does David take over the process? Why?
5. What does Hubbell assume the reader doesn't know about the effects of bee stings? What does she therefore explain?
6. Hubbell does not define technical terms, but see the explanations in the margins of the reading.

Writing a Process Analysis

Write an entertaining description of the steps you or a friend or a relative goes through in performing some daily, weekly, or less frequent ritual. Keep the topic simple so that you can describe it in one paragraph. For example, you could describe dressing for a date or formal event, getting ready to write a paper, doing stretching and warm-up exercises, studying for a big exam, combing hair over a bald spot, or straightening up the mess in a bedroom. Assume your readers are adults who might find your article in a popular magazine.

Gathering the Materials

After choosing a topic, brainstorm or cluster several lists of details to include in the paragraph. You may even want to do a trial run to get ideas. Add to these lists as more ideas occur to you. Include the following:

1. All the materials needed to perform the task. For instance, in a paragraph on fixing your hair: *shampoo, conditioner, towel, blow dryer, comb, brush, hair spray, curlers, curling iron, wall mirror, hand-held mirror, and a lot of patience*
2. Any terms that need to be defined and explained: *mousse, gel, or tantrum*
3. All the steps in the process: *washing, drying, setting, combing, further combing, crying—and then resetting, combing out, and so on*

Arranging the Materials

Now make an outline in which you list all the steps in the order in which you will present them. Include explanations of each step. The outline might look like this:

- I. Topic idea: *Teenage daughter spends hours preparing hair for a date*
- II. Preliminary information
 - A. Tools needed: *brush, hair spray, curlers*
 - B. Definitions of terms: *mousse, gel*
- III. Steps in the process
 - A. *Washing hair*
 - B. *Drying hair*
 - C. *Styling hair*
 - D. *Styling hair again*
- IV. Conclusion: *Daughter looks great*

TIPS

For Making the Steps Clear

Transitions in a process analysis need to be very obvious so that readers recognize each step. Here are some useful transitions:

first, to begin, at the start
second, next, then, after that,
following that, later
third, fourth, fifth
finally, last, to finish

If some steps in the process occur at the same time, you can introduce them with these transitions:

meanwhile, during, at the same time, while

Writing the First Draft

Now write a first draft of the paragraph that includes all of these elements:

1. A topic sentence that identifies the process and suggests or outlines the steps, such as "My teenage daughter spends a very long time preparing her hair for a date."
2. One or more sentences that list the materials used in the process and define any specialized terms.
3. A step-by-step description of the process, arranged in sequential order.

Revising the First Draft

Let the following checklist guide you in revising your paragraph. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the paragraph.

REVISION CHECKLIST

YES NO

PROCESS ANALYSIS

- Does a topic sentence identify the process and then outline or suggest the steps involved in performing the process? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Is the importance of the process clear? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Does the paragraph identify the tools or materials needed to perform the process? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Does the paragraph clearly define any unusual or specialized terms? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Are all the important steps in the process clearly explained and presented in sequential order? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Take notes of these responses to guide your revision. Rewrite the paragraph later when you can examine it with fresh eyes and a clear mind. You might ask a classmate to try the process you describe, or at least try to follow it, and to let you know if any instructions or steps are not clear.

Further Revising and Editing

Return to the paragraph and revise it again. Edit and proofread it before handing in a clean copy of your work.

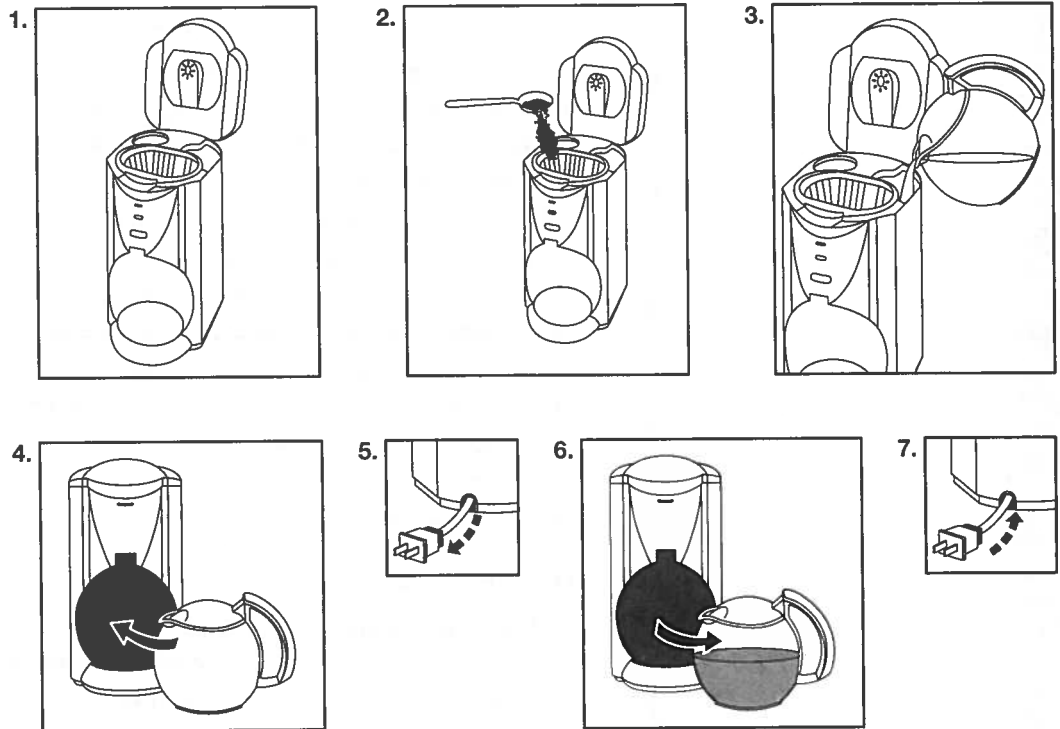
Additional Writing Assignment 1: Explain a Diagram

Write instructions that accompany the following diagram to explain and clarify the process it illustrates. Assume that your purpose is to instruct readers in performing the process. They'll be looking at the diagram as they read your instructions.

Begin by clustering or by making several brainstorming lists. Then write a full description of the process, explaining each step or series of related short steps. Revise the paragraph until it clearly follows a logical format such as the following:

1. An opening sentence that introduces the subject, summarizes the process, and mentions the materials or parts involved
2. A middle section that describes each step in the process
3. A final paragraph that summarizes the process or restates its importance

Be sure to include appropriate transitional words to show the movement between steps. Revise and edit your paper, and hand in a clean final draft



A Student Model Essay

Here's a process analysis by Erica Teal, a student at Truman College in Chicago. As you read it, notice her goal in writing the essay—that is, what she wants readers to do with the information. Pay special attention to the first paragraph, noting why she feels that the process she describes is important and the way she introduces the three major steps of the routine.

Stretching for the Long Run

Erica Teal

* * * *

- 1 I never thought warming up and stretching were important before and after a long run, until I pulled a muscle in my thigh, and that was just part of the pain. Isn't running supposed to be good for you? I was having too much fun to worry about such details. Warming up and stretching might possibly be the most crucial part of your workout, so don't skip it. To get the best out of running from both performance and enjoyment, adopt a routine that includes an effective warm-up, stretching, and cooldown.
- 2 Warming up is often overlooked, but should be part of your injury prevention routine. After my injuries, I decided to warm up five minutes each day before my run. The benefits of a warm-up before running include increasing your body temperature and getting your blood flowing. The increased blood flow in the muscles gives you flexibility, which reduces the likelihood of injury. To warm up, you could pedal for a few minutes on a stationary bike or jump rope a few turns.
- 3 After you have warmed up, you are ready to stretch. Stretching gives flexibility, and without it, you are an injury waiting to happen. Stretching is not the same as warming up. A good stretching routine will enhance your performance through elasticity. When you stretch, move slowly and gradually into each position and hold it for ten seconds before relaxing again. Repeat each stretch several times. After stretching, your muscles are warmer and more elastic. Never stretch a muscle to the point of pain. Pain indicates that you are stretching too hard or that you have an injury that needs some attention—a doctor's attention, that is.
- 4 Cooling down is just as important as warming up. After a run, it's important to recover gently. A cooldown brings your muscles back to a resting state and decreases the likelihood of your getting hurt. A cool-down period is at least three minutes long and is followed by stretching the muscles to avoid soreness and, once again, injury.
- 5 A good warm-up, stretching, and cooldown are especially important before and after a run. The more you prepare for a run, the more you will enjoy yourself. You'll be injury free and happier in the long run.

Questions for Analysis

1. Which sentences in Erica's first paragraph serve as the introduction? Underline them. Which sentence states the thesis? Circle it.
2. What three steps in the process does Erica list in the first paragraph?
3. Underline the topic sentences in the three body paragraphs.
4. Briefly summarize the benefits of each step in the process.
5. What words in the conclusion restate (but vary) the main points of the body paragraphs?

9

Writing about Causes and Effects

We analyze causes and effects every day. We need to know the reasons why something happened. Why won't my car start? Why do I have a sore throat? Likewise, we need to know the results of some action or event. If I have the car repaired, how much will it cost? If I take a new antibiotic, will it cure my sore throat?

Writing about such causes or effects is also an important part of academic and professional life. In science courses—and in scientific professions—you may investigate the causes of a chemical reaction or the effects of a new chemical. In a nursing course, you need to know the causes of a fever and the results of a treatment. In a history course, you may need to know the causes—and results—of a war. In a business course—and in actual businesses—you may examine the effects of a new method of accounting or of advertising.

This chapter will show you how to write a paragraph on causes or effects by

- examining a model of causal analysis
- analyzing what makes an effective analysis on causes or effects
- thinking through ways to organize the paragraph
- giving you practice writing cause or effect paragraphs

A Model of Causal Analysis

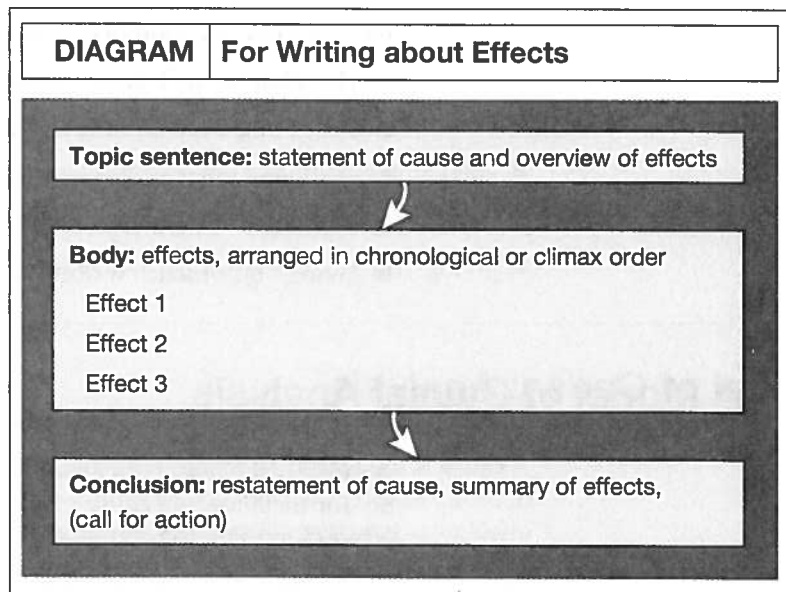
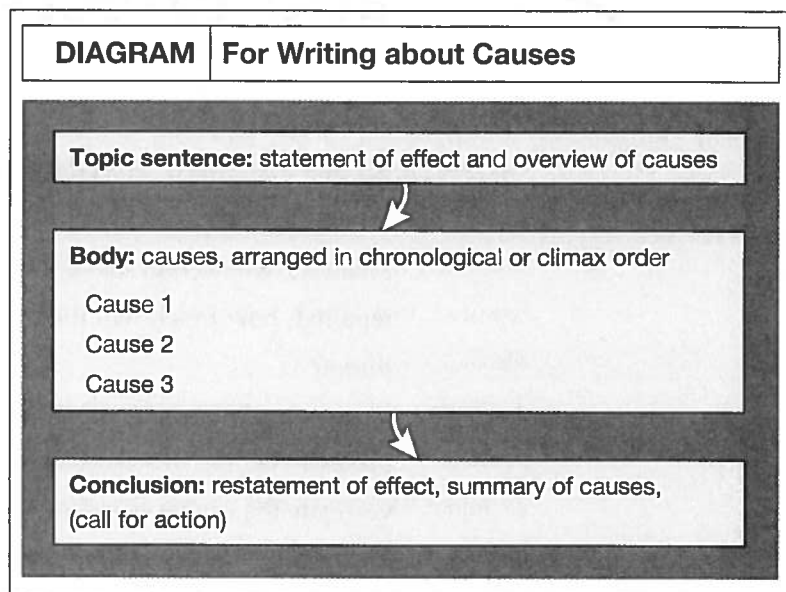
A **cause** is the reason an event happens, while an **effect** is the result of the cause. So, for instance, the cause of passing a course may be studying hard, while the effect of passing the course may be earning a degree.

Many things, however, have more than one cause. For example, a person may become ill from lack of sleep, too much stress, poor nutrition, and exposure to a virus. Likewise, many things can have more than one effect. A violent storm may destroy trees, flood streets, blow down power lines, and even tear the roofs off of houses.

If you trace several causes or effects in your paragraph, you may organize it somewhat like you'd do with a narration or a process analysis. You can tell a story of why something happened in **chronological order**. You were late this morning because the alarm didn't go off, you missed your bus, and the traffic was much slower than normal. Or you can explain the causes in a series of steps

arranged in **climax order**—moving from the weakest to the strongest reason. The restaurant is popular because the location is good, the prices are low, the service is fast, and the food is terrific.

Diagrams of a paragraph discussing causes and a paragraph discussing effects might, therefore, look like these:



Here's an example of a short essay that explains the probable causes of an event. Because the causes need to be explained in detail, the essay devotes an entire paragraph to each. As you read the essay, notice that the first paragraph introduces the event while the body paragraphs explore its possible causes, or the reasons that it happened.

The Mystery of Custer's Last Stand

* * * *

last stand: traditional name for the battle in which Custer was killed

- 1 Probably no other battle in U.S. history has created more controversy than the Battle of Little Bighorn River. On June 25, 1876, General George Armstrong Custer made his famous **last stand** against members of the Great Sioux Nation. After dividing the 700 troops of the Seventh Cavalry into three groups that would surround and attack a Native American village, he took command of one group and rushed them into the battle alone. As a result, 3,000 Sioux, led by their chief, Sitting Bull, killed Custer and every one of his 250 men. No one will ever know why Custer ordered his men into such a one-sided fight in which they had no chance for survival. No one will ever know why he didn't retreat once the battle had begun. No one will know the answers because no one from Custer's side lived to tell the story. However, some information about the battle—gathered from scouts, messengers, and the members of the other two groups—suggests four reasons.
- 2 First, Custer ignored the orders of his commanding officer. He was supposed to bring his troops to the valley of the Little Bighorn River and wait there until another army division could join him. But Custer decided to attack alone. He rode his troops all night and well past dawn, and his men and horses were exhausted when they entered the valley.
- 3 Second, Custer apparently ignored the advice of his own Native American scouts. The two men, Mitch Bouyer and Bloody Knife, warned him that there were too many Sioux warriors to be captured. Custer probably thought that his Seventh Cavalry could easily defeat any Native American fighters and didn't take the warnings of the scouts seriously.
- 4 Third, Custer probably misinterpreted the movements of the Sioux. After one of the three groups into which he divided his men, led by Major Marcus Reno, charged the village, a messenger told Custer that it contained far more warriors than they had expected. Custer apparently assumed that the number of Sioux didn't matter because they were running away. He and his group therefore rushed to the far end of the campsite to cut off the escape. He rode hard and fast, further wearing down his men and their horses.
- 5 Fourth, after the three groups of Custer's men had separated, they probably soon lost communication with each other. Major Reno attacked the campsite, expecting Custer to follow him from the rear. But Custer was trapped at the far end of the camp. Reno finally retreated to the woods near the village, where he was forced to stop and fight. His Native American opponents not only outnumbered him, but they also had better weapons. By the time the third group of the Seventh Cavalry arrived, many of Reno's men were dead, and this last group was trapped as well. Meanwhile, Custer and every single one of his men were being killed.
- 6 To this day, when people think of Custer, they think of headstrong behavior and stupidity. Although no one knows exactly why Custer and his men lost their lives, headstrong behavior and stupidity are the likely reasons.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the function of the first paragraph of the essay? What specific details do you learn from it? What is the function of the last paragraph?
2. How many causes for Custer's defeat does the essay suggest? What in the organization makes these causes easy to locate?

3. What words and phrases show a lack of certainty? Why are they necessary?
4. When does the essay depart from past-tense explanation? Why?
5. Is the final paragraph a logical conclusion, based on the evidence presented? Why or why not?

The Process of Writing a Causal Analysis



TIPS

For Transitions Showing Cause and Effect

To guide your readers through a paragraph on causes or effects, the following transitions might be useful.

For identifying causes: *reason, cause, because, since*

For labeling causes or effects: *first, second, finally*

For qualifying causes or effects that aren't definite: *maybe, possibly, probably*

Write a paragraph analyzing the reasons behind an important decision you've recently made—for example, to major in a particular subject, to work part time, to move, or to buy a car. Assume you're writing to explain your decision to an academic adviser, your parents, or a friend.

Generating and Arranging the Materials

Explore your ideas by clustering or brainstorming a list of the causes. Then choose at least three reasons for your decision—the most important, clearest reasons—to develop in your paragraph. List the reasons either (1) chronologically if they happened in a time sequence, or (2) in climax order, moving from the least to most important if they happened at or near the same time:

"Finally, and most importantly, I realized . . ."

"But these reasons alone wouldn't have been enough. The strongest reason came . . ."

Using a simple chart may help you organize ideas:

Causes

1. _____

Example: _____

2. _____

Example: _____

3. _____

Example: _____

Writing the First Draft

As you begin work on your first draft, write a topic sentence or thesis statement to introduce or summarize the causes you'll discuss:

"I decided to major in computer sciences *for several reasons.*"

OR

"I decided to major in computer sciences *because of my interest in business, my good grades in computer classes, and the great job opportunities in this field.*"

Explore the reasons in the body of the paragraph, but don't just list them. Explain them, and, if you can, support them with specific examples. Consider introducing them through narration, description, or process analysis:

Narration: I wasn't very interested when I began my first computer class. But that changed the day a guest lecturer from one of the large firms downtown came to speak to the class. . . .

Description: The company where I had my summer job occupies a large, modern brick building. I worked in a spacious office with a marble floor, polished metal furniture, a wall of windows overlooking the river, and the latest computer equipment. My PC had a 19-inch flat paneled monitor and wireless keyboard and mouse. . . .

Process: My expertise in Web design developed in three stages. . . .

Revising the First Draft

Let the following checklist guide you in revising your paragraph. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the paragraph.

REVISION CHECKLIST

CAUSAL ANALYSIS

- Does the topic sentence state the event (the decision) and clearly introduce or summarize the causes (reasons)?
- Is each reason presented in a clear chronological or climax order?
- If the paragraph uses climax organization, is the strongest cause or effect presented last?
- Is the analysis of the causes and effects specific enough to be convincing?
- Are the transitions between ideas clear?
- Is the conclusion logical or reasonable?

YES NO

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

☐ ☐

Take notes of these responses to guide your revision. Rewrite the paragraph later when you can examine it with fresh eyes and a clear mind. Pay special attention to clarity.

Further Revising and Editing

Revise the paragraph again. Edit and proofread it, and hand in a clean copy.

11

Making Comparisons and Contrasts

Each day you make comparisons or contrasts: this lesson was easier than the last one; traffic this morning ran as smoothly as traffic the day before; the test in biology was the hardest yet. Comparisons and contrasts examine the similarities and differences among people, ideas, or things. Sometimes you write comparisons and contrasts in order to evaluate: that is, to argue that something is better, more valuable, or more useful. Other times, you write comparisons and contrasts to clarify ideas. This chapter will show you how to write a comparison or contrast paragraph by

- examining a model paragraph of comparison and contrast
- analyzing what makes a comparison and contrast effective
- thinking through ways to organize a comparison-contrast paragraph
- giving you practice writing comparison-contrasts

A Model Paragraph of Comparison-Contrast

A **comparison** shows how people or things are similar. A **contrast** shows how they are different, usually to evaluate them. And a **comparison-contrast** paragraph discusses both similarities and differences. To do so, it must also organize, explain, and illustrate the similarities and differences in ways that make sense.

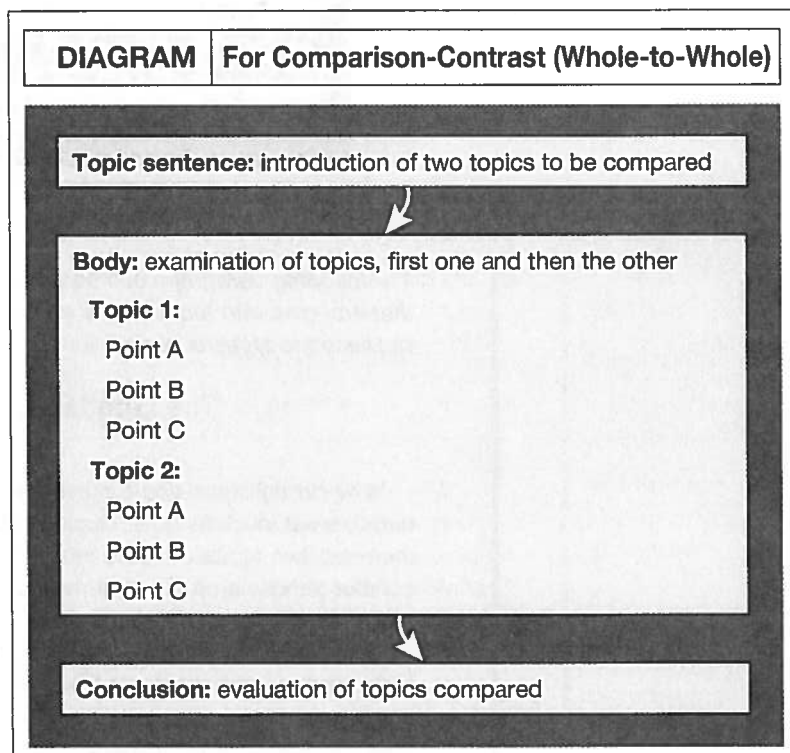
There are two main strategies for organizing the comparisons and contrasts:

1. **Whole-to-Whole (or Block) Organization.** In this organization, you describe Movie X completely, and then Movie Y completely. You draw the comparisons and contrasts while describing Movie Y, or after describing Movie Y.
2. **Part-to-Part Organization.** In this organization, you describe one part of Movie X, such as its plot, and then compare it to the plot of Movie Y. Then you return to Movie X to describe its acting, followed by a comparison to the acting in Movie Y. You continue in this way until you have drawn all the comparisons and contrasts between the two movies. If you discuss point A about one subject, then your readers must see its relationship to point A about the other.

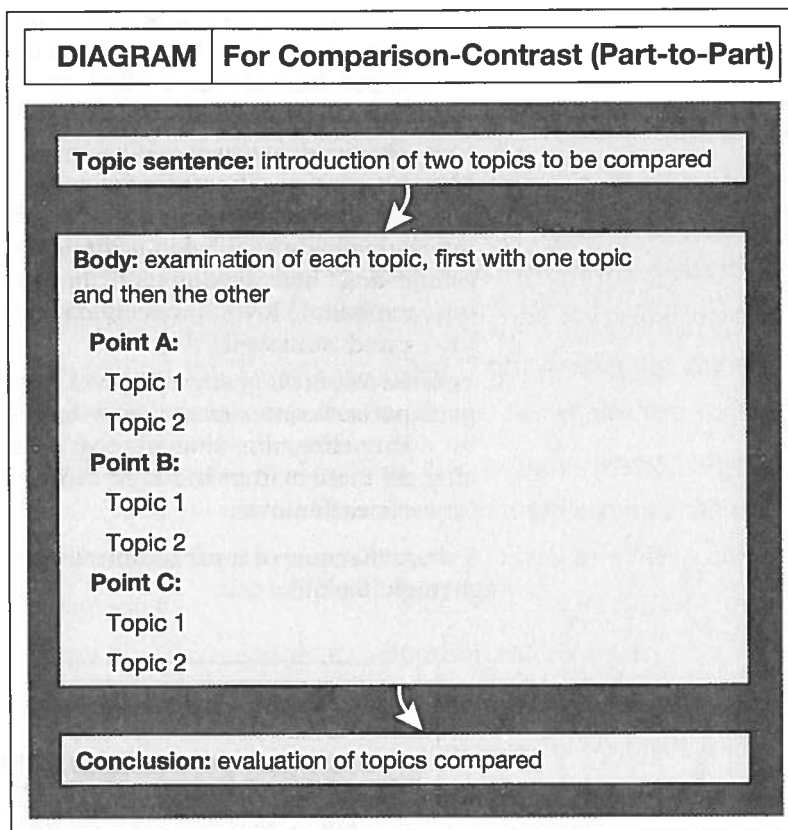
Keep these additional guidelines in mind as you compose and revise the paragraph:

1. *Don't oversimplify.* Very few issues are as simple as black versus white or good versus evil. So be careful as you evaluate—deciding if something is better than something else. It's fine to say that Movie X is better than Movie Y, but don't automatically assume Movie Y is a waste of time. Movie Y may be entertaining, but not as good as Movie X.
2. *Don't use circular reasoning.* When explaining why Movie X is better than Movie Y, give specific reasons to support your claim. Don't say that Movie X was better because it was better. For example, the statement, "Movie X was interesting because it held my attention" is circular reasoning because "interesting" and "held my attention" mean the same thing. Give specific reasons instead: "Movie X was interesting because it was fast-moving, full of surprises, and well acted."
3. *Be consistent in discussing each point of comparison or contrast.* Make your comparisons and contrasts easy for your readers to understand. If you discuss the acting, directing, photography, and editing of Movie X, you must discuss all these matters in Movie Y. You should also discuss them in the same order for each movie.

A diagram of a paragraph using the whole-to-whole, or block, organization might look like this:



And a diagram of a paragraph using part-to-part organization might look like this:



The following paragraph compares and contrasts two subjects. As you read it, notice that it begins with a contrast of white and dark meat. Then notice that a comparison between two types of birds follows.

The Light and the Dark of It

* * * *

Why do chickens and turkeys have both dark and light meat, while most other birds we eat (such as quail, duck, or pigeon) have dark meat only? The reason is that there are two types of fibers in the muscles of birds: red and white. The red fibers contain a muscle protein that makes animals able to work for much longer periods than do white fibers, which are designed for short, powerful bursts of activity. You can therefore guess which birds have the most red-fibered muscles—and the most dark meat. They are the creatures that must fly long distances to migrate or to find food—the geese, ducks, and quails. But chickens and turkeys live a less strenuous life. They move around by walking or running, so only their legs and thighs contain dark red fibers. These land birds don't use their wings and breasts very much, so these parts contain light white fibers. In fact, the absence of red fiber in wings and breasts is an advantage. When chickens and turkeys are threatened, their wings and upper bodies must deliver a lot of power quickly, but for only a short time. The next time you pay an extra fifty cents for an order of all-white-meat chicken, remember that these parts of birds racked up fewer trips in the air than you may have taken in an airplane.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the topic sentence of the paragraph?
2. Is the main purpose of the paragraph to inform, persuade, or entertain?
3. What is the paragraph comparing or contrasting?
4. List the points of comparisons and contrasts in the paragraph. Which does the paragraph mainly discuss—similarities or differences?
5. Is this primarily a whole-to-whole or part-to-part comparison-contrast?
6. Which words show differences among the types of birds? Which words signal similarities among the types of birds?

The Process of Writing a Comparison-Contrast

Write a paragraph for a feature section of a newspaper or magazine. Compare and contrast two subjects you know well. Conclude by recommending one or both of them to your readers. You might choose two movies, two popular music groups (or songs), two books, two performances, two types of sports (or two games in the same sport), two celebrities, or two cars.

Gathering and Generating the Materials

Begin by reviewing the topic of your comparison and contrast: if possible, see, inspect, listen to, or read about it again—and take notes of what you observe or find.

Use a simple chart to help you generate and organize the points of comparison and contrast. As you list one point about the first subject, you must consider the corresponding point about the second subject. Continue until your chart covers every point. Here, for example, is a chart for two movies:

| | College Clowns | Crash and Burn |
|-----------------|---|---|
| <i>Type</i> | 1. comedy | 1. action |
| <i>Actors</i> | 2. unknown actors | 2. major stars |
| <i>Plot</i> | 3. not much plot | 3. suspense leading to a climax |
| <i>Contents</i> | 4. bad humor and silly dialogue | 4. action more important than clever dialogue |
| <i>Rating</i> | 5. R | 5. R |
| <i>Length</i> | 6. 90 minutes | 6. two hours |
| <i>Cost</i> | 7. small budget, no unusual locations, and hardly any special effects | 7. large budget, with plane crashes, car chases, and many special effects |
| <i>Audience</i> | 8. appeals to teenagers | 8. appeals to teenagers |

After you've completed the chart, construct a second chart with the items grouped according to similarities and differences. Create new points to compare and contrast as they emerge from your note taking and thinking.

| | College Clowns | Crash and Burn |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Similarities | | |
| <i>Rating</i> | 1. R | 1. R |
| <i>Audience</i> | 2. teenagers | 2. teenagers |
| <i>Dialogue</i> | 3. weak | 3. weak |
| Differences | | |
| <i>Type</i> | 1. comedy | 1. action picture |
| <i>Actors</i> | 2. unknown actors | 2. major stars |
| <i>Plot</i> | 3. not much plot | 3. suspense leading to a climax |
| <i>Contents</i> | 4. bad humor | 4. action |
| <i>Length</i> | 5. 90 minutes | 5. two hours |
| <i>Cost</i> | 6. small budget, no unusual locations, and hardly any special effects | 6. large budget, with plane crashes, car chases, and many special effects |

**TIPS****For Indicating Comparison-Contrast**

Help your readers note comparison-contrast by supplying appropriate transitions. Here's a list:

For comparison (similarities): *like, as, likewise, similarly, also, too, moreover, in a similar way or fashion*

For contrast (differences): *in contrast, on the one hand . . . on the other hand, however, unlike, but*

Arranging the Materials

Then decide on the type of organization to use in your comparison. Read down both columns of the chart for a whole-to-whole approach. Read across the columns for a part-to-part approach. As you continue planning, select examples of each point of comparison or contrast, and consider what explanations or examples to provide.

Writing the First Draft

Now write a first draft. Write a topic sentence that states the major claim of the paragraph, such as: "Although the movies *College Clowns* and *Crash and Burn* both appeal to teenagers, they do so for different reasons." Use either whole-to-whole or part-to-part organization. If the organization you choose doesn't work well when you compose the draft, switch to the other organization. Add transitions to introduce the points of comparison and to emphasize the similarities and differences. Try to conclude with a statement that sums up the main points of the paragraph or that evaluates the topics you've compared.

Revising the First Draft

Let the checklist on page 99 guide you in revising your paragraph. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the paragraph.

REVISION CHECKLIST**COMPARISON
AND CONTRAST**

- Is the purpose of the comparison and contrast clear?
- Does the paragraph include a topic sentence that names the two things to be compared and contrasted and states the central claim?
- If you have used whole-to-whole organization, are the points of comparison or contrast discussed in the same order?
- Is each point of comparison or contrast clearly explained and illustrated?
- Are the transitions between main ideas clear?
- Is the final evaluation valid? That is, have the points of comparison and contrast prepared readers for it?

YES NO

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Take notes of these responses to guide your revision. Rewrite the paragraph later when you can examine it with fresh eyes and a clear mind. Pay special attention to organization.

Further Revising and Editing

Return to the paragraph and revise it again. Edit and proofread it before handing in a clean copy of your work.

Additional Writing Assignment 1: Evaluating Ideas

Assume you're a newspaper or magazine columnist who often expresses opinions on matters of interest to you and your readers. Write a paragraph of comparison and contrast on one of the following topics:

- families with one or two children or families with five or more children
- studying business or studying art (or music, literature, or liberal arts)
- marrying young or marrying later in life
- working part time to pay for college or borrowing the money
- doing high-impact activities such as running or low-impact activities such as walking

Choose a subject you know well. If you used whole-to-whole organization in the earlier assignment in this chapter, then use part-to-part here—or vice versa. Start with a topic sentence that names the two things you will compare or contrast and makes a claim about them. Tell stories or cite examples to support your main points if possible. Recommend or suggest which of the two things you're comparing is best—or perhaps best for some people, while the other thing is best for other people.

A Student Model Essay

Here's an essay written by Mirham Mahmutagic, a student at Truman College in Chicago who grew up in Bosnia. It compares how Bosnians and Americans think about how to use their time. As you read it, notice how Mirham makes a part-to-part comparison-contrast between time spent in school in the two countries and then, later, between time spent with families.

Examining the Differences: Old Tradition vs. New World

Mirham Mahmutagic

* * * *

- 1 When I first came to the United States, I remember wondering why Americans have fast-food restaurants, or why they spend so much time eating out, instead of cooking their meals at home, the way we did in Bosnia. Well, after spending six years here in Chicago, I have learned that besides food, everything else also seems to be "on the go" here in the States. That, simply said, is the biggest difference between the "old world" of tradition and history, where I came from, and this "new world" of high rises and big money.
- 2 In the United States, time, or should I better say the lack of it, has a direct impact on people and their decision on how to use that time throughout the entire course of their lives. People in the States spend a lot of time in their schools, starting as early as the first grade of elementary school. On the average, children here attend eight to nine hours of school every day, five days a week, while children in Bosnia, on the average, attend five to six hours of school every day. After graduating from high school, American youth are facing five to eight years of schooling toward their professional degrees, while in Bosnia that translates into four to five years of college. Finally, at the age of 23, a young doctor starts practicing medicine in Bosnia, while at the same age of 23 the American future physician is finishing the first year of medical school and heading toward the next three. Ironically, the American doctor will spend the rest of his or her life chasing that time "lost" in school by working endless hours and 48-hour shifts year after year, while the doctor in Bosnia will work 40 to 50 hours a week, enjoying most Saturdays and Sundays off.
- 3 This seemingly simple time grid suggests that children in Bosnia do have more time, outside of school, to spend with their families and their friends, while children in the States don't. Accordingly, children in Bosnia do grow up closer to their families, and as adults they adjust their lives so that they can spend more time in their homes and less time at work. On the other hand, children in America probably grow up with a different set of values, where their career and work will come first and the time for their families and friends will come second. As a result of their dedication to their careers and their work, young Americans appear to be more independent, ambitious, efficient, and prosperous compared to youth in Bosnia. As adults, they seem to have much stronger work ethics than Bosnians do, which ultimately leads to the current immeasurable economic difference between the two countries. Today, those Americans are able to give their children the latest toys and video games, expensive cars, and the latest technological inventions, which is something most of the children in Bosnia grow up without.

- 4 I can still remember just how beautiful my childhood was growing up in Bosnia. My friends, with whom I have spent endless hours playing games like tag, riding a bike, or playing ball, constantly surrounded me. Unlike many fathers in the States, my father always had time to play with me, help me with the homework, and simply be around whenever I needed him. Now that I think about how important his presence in my life was, I keep wondering if I will have enough time to spend with my child to be able to show him how important the family is, just like my parent showed to me.

Questions for Analysis

1. What sentence or sentences in the first paragraph introduce the comparison? Underline the sentence(s). What are the topic sentences in the remaining paragraphs? Underline them as well.
2. How many comparisons does Mirham make in the second paragraph? Number them, and circle the words that serve as transitions between comparisons.
3. In the third paragraph, and then later in the final paragraph, Mirham begins to discuss how the two cultures he compares seem to have differing values. What differences does he see? Do you agree with his observations? Which values, in his opinion, are most important? Which values, in your opinion, are most important?
4. How does the conclusion relate to ideas earlier in the essay?
5. Construct a grid of the comparisons or contrasts Mirham makes in his essay. Are they consistent and complete?

Additional Writing Assignment 2: Evaluating Values

Like Mirham Mahmutagic, write a paragraph (or an essay) in which you contrast one set of values you have learned with another set that other people seem to think are important. You might consider any one of the following issues: the relationship between parent and child, neatness, study habits, manners, behavior in school, behavior at parties, showing off, the use of language (including slang), or the importance of money or material possessions.

12

Defining Terms

No matter what type of writing you do—whether you’re explaining a process, comparing objects or ideas, or writing a report—you may use a term or concept that your audience doesn’t understand. In those cases, you need a definition, that is, an explanation of what you mean when you use the term. When the explanation is complex and requires more than a few words, you may have to write a paragraph of definition. This chapter will show you how to do that by

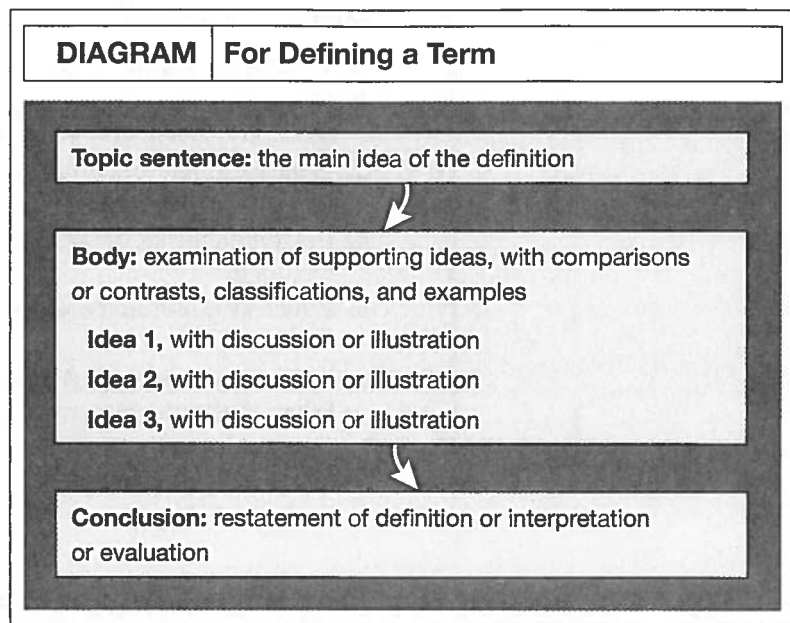
- examining a model paragraph of definition
- analyzing what makes a definition effective
- thinking through ways to organize a definition
- giving you practice writing definitions

A Model Paragraph of Definition

As you predict your audience’s response to your writing, you must think about the times they might ask, “What do you mean?” Suppose, for example, that in a letter to your local school board suggesting changes in the curriculum, you use the term *good students*. The board members might wonder whether you mean quiet students or talkative students, competitive students or cooperative students, students who can recite what they learn or students who can apply it. You need a **definition**—an explanation of how you’re using the term.

Your explanation of a term can be a simple matter, and sometimes it is. You can define a term merely with a **synonym**—another word that means the same thing. Or you can cite a short dictionary definition of the term. But at other times defining is not so simple. You may need to explain and illustrate exactly the meaning you intend—or do not intend—in one or more full paragraphs. That definition may include comparisons, contrasts, a classification, and examples.

The diagram on page 103 shows one way a definition paragraph might be organized, assuming that the concept to be defined includes three important ideas. Note that it arranges the ideas in **climax order**—going from the least to the most important.



The following definition is taken from a long article in Newsweek magazine that discusses the growing epidemic of allergies among young people. As you read it, note the formal definition of allergy in the first sentence. Then notice how the account increases your understanding of the term by explaining how an allergic reaction works.

What Is an Allergy?

Jerry Adler

* * * *

- 1 An allergy is an overreaction by the immune system to a foreign substance, which can enter the body through a variety of routes. [The foreign substance] can be inhaled, like pollen or dander, the tiny flakes of skin shed by domestic animals. It can be injected, like insect venom or penicillin, or merely touch the skin, like the latex in medical gloves. Or it can be ingested. According to the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network, almost any food can trigger an allergy, although eight categories account for 90 percent of all reactions: milk, eggs, peanuts (technically, a legume), tree nuts, finfish, shellfish, soy, and wheat. (Allergies have nothing to do with the condition known as food intolerance; people who lack an enzyme for digesting dairy products, for instance, may suffer intestinal problems, but they are not allergic to milk.)
- 2 For reasons not fully understood, in some people these otherwise harmless substances provoke the same reactions by which the body attempts to rid itself of dangerous pathogens. These may include sneezing, vomiting, and the all-purpose localized immune-system arousal known as inflammation. The lungs may be affected; allergies are a leading trigger for asthma attacks. In extreme cases, the reaction involves virtually all organ systems and leads to anaphylaxis, a dramatic drop in blood pressure accompanied by extreme respiratory distress that may be fatal without prompt treatment.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the central definition of *allergy*? Underline it.
2. How many ways may foreign substances enter the body and cause allergic reactions? What words help you identify the number of ways?
3. What examples are given for each of the ways? Underline them. Which of the ways has the most examples? Why?
4. Underline the sentence that draws a contrast. Why was that sentence included?
5. Which sentence in the second paragraph states the topic idea? Underline it twice.
6. Is the second paragraph arranged in sequential order or climax order? What effect does that arrangement create?
7. The definition of *allergy* also includes definitions of additional terms. Circle the words defined. Why are those definitions included?

The Process of Writing a Definition Paragraph

Assume you are writing a short definition of a term for your classmates. Your choice of a term to define can come from your coursework in school (for example, *mitosis* in biology, *html* in computer science, *socialism* or *capitalism* in social science, *ethics* in philosophy, *thesis statement* in composition, the *Middle Ages* in world history, *counterpoint* in music, *Impressionism* in art, and so on). It can come from your job experiences. Or it can come from your experiences in living in a country other than the United States.

Statement of Definition. Your paragraph or essay should include a sentence that states the definition, followed by a fuller explanation of its meaning. That explanation might include examples that give a full picture of the definition and contrasts with other terms that clarify what the definition is and what it is not. You can state the definition in one of two ways:

- You can express it by a **synonym**—a word with virtually the same meaning as another word. Here are examples of definitions by synonym:

A CRT (cathode-ray tube) is computer terminology for a *monitor* or *television screen*.

The *aardvark*—or *anteater*—is found in southern Africa.

To *eschew* means to *avoid*.

Note that the synonym and the word it defines must be the same part of speech (noun and noun, verb and verb, adjective and adjective) so that one term can be substituted for another.

- You can express it in a **formal statement of definition**, the method most often used in dictionaries. The statement begins by placing the term into a larger category.

| Word | Category |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>An allergy</i> | is an overreaction by the immune system . . . |
| <i>A psychiatrist</i> | is a medical doctor . . . |

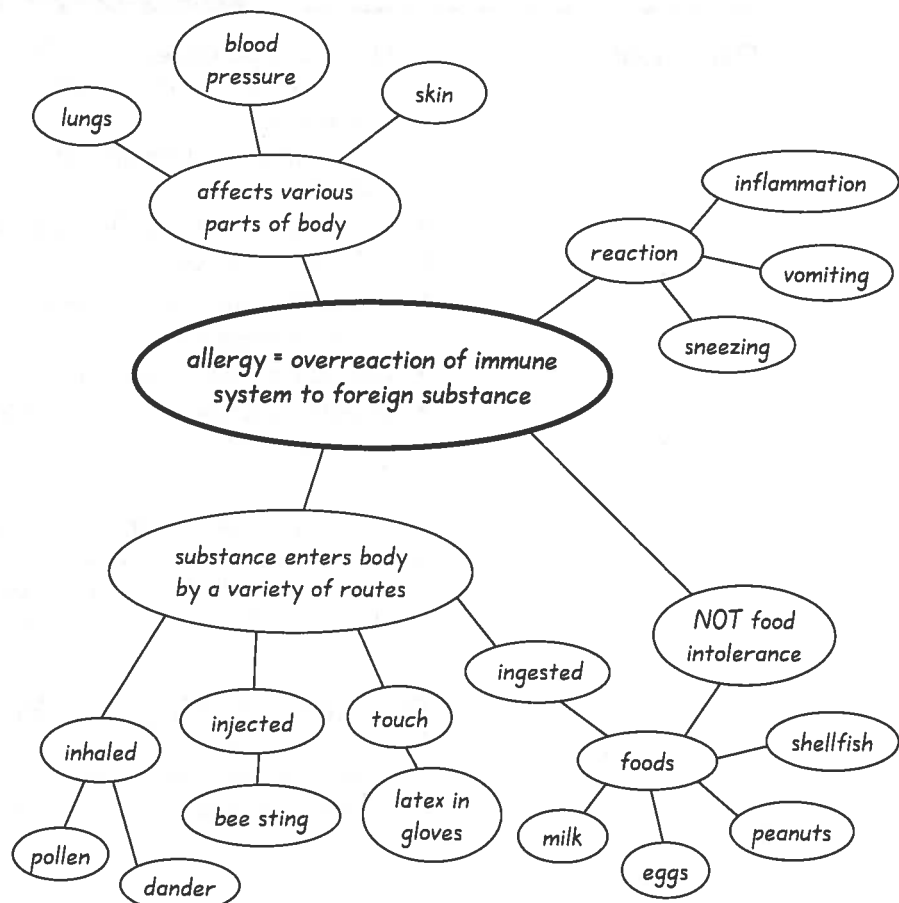
Distinguishing Characteristics. After the statement of definition you add **criteria**—or standards for judging or distinguishing the definition from other words in the same category. These are distinguishing characteristics.

| Word | Category or class | Distinguishing characteristics |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <i>An allergy</i> | is an overreaction by the immune system | to a foreign substance, which can enter the body through a variety of routes. |
| <i>A psychiatrist</i> | is a medical doctor | who specializes in the study, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illnesses. |

You may be able to quote the definition from a dictionary or textbook—if that definition fits your meaning and you cite your source. But writers sometimes define a term in a way that doesn't fit the standard dictionary definition. You'll see an example shortly.

Gathering the Materials

Brainstorm a list, or make a clustering chart, of the most important or easily noticed characteristics of the term you're defining. Here's a clustering chart for the definition of *allergy*. It starts with the term and its formal definition in the center. Each branch explores a different characteristic. Further branches list examples.



**TIPS****For Transitions
in Definitions**

Here are some transitions
that may help you connect
ideas:

*for example, that is, that
is to say, according to,
moreover, in addition, in con-
trast*

Selecting and Arranging the Materials

After you've brainstormed or clustered your ideas, select at least three of the most important characteristics to develop further. Make sure each is supported by examples. Include contrasts. Notice, in the clustering chart, that *allergy* is partly defined by what it is not—it is not a food intolerance.

You may wish to outline your paragraph of definition before you start writing.

Writing the First Draft

Look over your outline. Then write a preliminary topic sentence that states the general definition. Continue with sentences that state each of the characteristics you've chosen. Follow each characteristic with an example. Conclude with a re-statement or an evaluation.

Revising the First Draft

Let the following checklist guide you in revising your paragraph. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the paragraph.

REVISION CHECKLIST

YES NO
DEFINITION

- Does the topic sentence introduce the term to be defined and the main idea of the term or a formal statement of definition? ☐ ☐
- Is the definition developed through distinguishing characteristics? ☐ ☐
- Do discussions of the characteristics include examples? ☐ ☐
- Is the term defined by contrasts, or by what it is not? ☐ ☐
- Are technical terms further defined? ☐ ☐
- Are the characteristics arranged in climax order? ☐ ☐
- Are the transitions between ideas clear? ☐ ☐
- Does the conclusion include a relevant interpretation or evaluation? ☐ ☐

Take notes of these responses to guide your revision. Rewrite the definition later when you can examine it with fresh eyes and a clear mind. Pay special attention to completeness. Is the paragraph of definition complete enough so that readers will know—fully—what you mean by the term? If not, add more explanation.

Further Revising and Editing

After waiting a few hours or days, return to the paragraph and revise it again. Edit your work, and hand in a clean copy.

Additional Writing Assignment 1: Define a Person in a Role

Write your own personal definition of a *good father, mother, teacher, or leader*. Include several distinguishing characteristics and examples of each. Your examples can come from your own experiences, the experiences of people you know, or experiences you can imagine.

A Student Model Essay

Amra Skocic, a student at Truman College in Chicago who came from Bosnia, wrote the following definition essay. In it, she defines the term courageous act by examining the behavior of one person. Note that she begins by citing a formal definition of the term in the first paragraph. Then, in the body of the essay, she gives the definition substance by examining specific distinguishing characteristics and providing extended examples of each. Her final paragraph summarizes the key points.

True Courage

Amra Skocic

* * * *

- 1 It is not very often that we hear about, read about, or experience a truly courageous act. Indeed, do we really even understand what a courageous act is? According to *Webster's Dictionary*, *courage* is defined as "the ability to control fear when facing danger or pain." But there is much more involved. A courageous act is an unselfish gesture taken on a voluntary basis which involves some risk. An example is Oscar Schindler, the real-life hero of the movie *Schindler's List*, who performs a courageous act by saving thousands of Jewish lives during the Second World War.
- 2 Oscar Schindler is a German factory owner who employs Jewish people and later rescues them from death in the concentration camps. In the beginning, he is primarily motivated by the opportunity to start production and earn a high profit using forced labor. As time goes by, Schindler's motivation changes from greed to selflessness. As he witnesses the mass execution and torture of the Jews in Poland, he realizes that he has the ability to save innocent lives. Gradually this realization overcomes his desire for money. Led by unselfish motivation, his action meets the first **criterion** for courage.
- 3 A courageous act must be voluntary, meaning that the person performing the act must have the full opportunity to walk away and avoid risk. Schindler understands his choices, but the one that he makes is to employ Jewish people. He could just as well have employed German workers or used other options without taking any risk. The voluntary nature of employing Jewish people in his factory meets the second criterion for courage.
- 4 A courageous act involves risk and sacrifice. How much the goal is worth determines the price of risk. From the moment Oscar Schindler decides to save those innocent lives, he is aware of the danger to his own life. If discovered by the Nazis, he will inevitably be killed. This risk completes the third and the final criterion for a courageous act.

criterion: singular for
criteria

13

Persuading an Audience

Persuasion is an important part of everyday life. Each day in conversation, you make requests and demands—for example, that a friend lend you some money; that your professor allow you more time to complete an assignment; or that your child, roommate, or spouse put the dirty dishes in the sink. Less often—but far more important—you make written requests that employers consider you for a job, customers buy your products, or a government agency provide you with important documents. In college writing, you must persuade your instructor that your analysis, interpretation, or understanding of an issue is correct or reasonable.

This chapter will show you how to shape a persuasive argument by

- describing the elements of persuasion
- examining a model of persuasion
- giving you practice in shaping ideas into effective arguments
- giving you practice in writing persuasive arguments

A Model of Persuasion

Persuasion is an attempt to convince others that they should accept your views or do what you ask of them. Of course, you cannot persuade everyone to accept every viewpoint, but a well-planned and reasonable argument can often be effective.

The Elements of Persuasion

A persuasive argument should follow a *persuasive strategy* based on an anticipation of the audience response, the reason for persuading, and the type of appeals it includes.

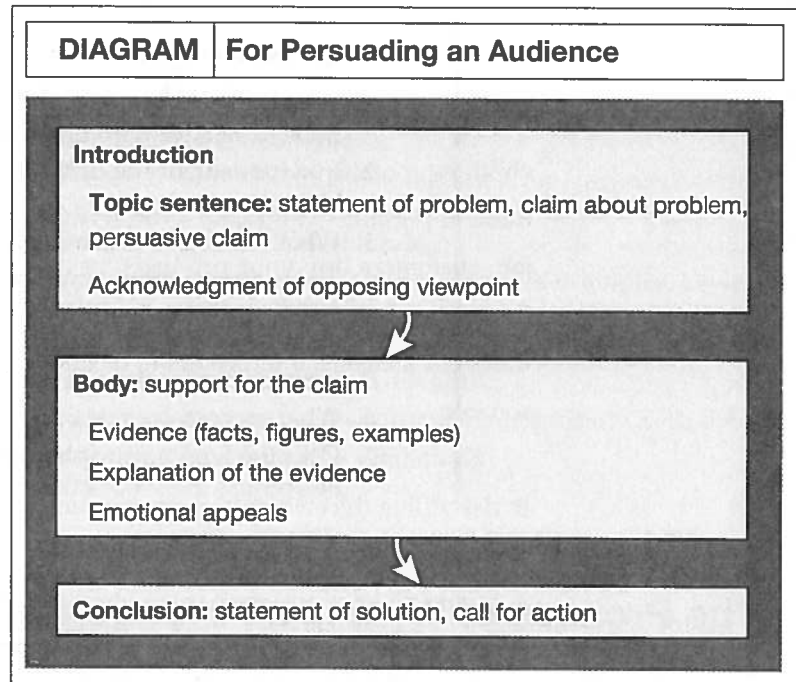
Audience. You cannot ignore your audience's opposing beliefs or feelings about your subject matter. Therefore, you should acknowledge those beliefs or feelings. State them at the beginning of the argument to demonstrate that you're reasonable and fair.

Reason for Persuading. Your goal in persuading may simply be to ask someone to consider an idea, or it may be a **call for action**—a demand or request that you

audience do something. State that goal early in the argument. Make your claim in a topic sentence, and then develop the claim in the body of the paragraph or essay.

Type of Persuasive Appeals. The best way to support your claim is with solid evidence: facts, figures, and examples. You may also choose to support a claim by citing an expert or authority on the subject. Appeals to emotions such as sympathy, anger, or even humor can be effective, too. But don't appeal only to emotions. Respect the intelligence of your audience, and tell the truth.

A diagram of persuasive argument might look like this:



Here's an example of a short persuasive argument. As you read it, note that the author states his claim directly and then supports it. Note the transitions that signal the support.

Why Write on a Computer?

Some students may feel most comfortable writing a paper by hand, but there's a better and more productive way. Writing on a computer has many great advantages. First of all, the computer makes it easy to change or rearrange your ideas as you compose a draft. To change an idea, all you need to do is highlight the text and then type in the new material. The original material will disappear as soon as you begin to type. To rearrange an idea, again you simply highlight the text and then use the cut-and-paste commands to place it in a different spot. Second, the computer makes revision much easier. Double-space the text and leave wide margins, and print out your draft so that you can make handwritten notes and changes. Then, instead of copying over the entire paper by hand, you can simply return to the original version in your computer and enter the

changes. You can repeat this process as often as you want. Third, the spell and grammar checkers on the computer can help you in editing your work. You shouldn't rely on these tools completely because they can't recognize every error. For example, an incorrect spelling of a word may actually be the correct spelling of another word—but the computer won't know that. And the computer may also label something as a grammatical error when in fact there is no error at all. That's because the computer isn't reading your paper; it's simply scanning the words according to a formula someone designed. Finally, the computer allows you to print out a clean copy of your work so that your audience won't have any difficulty reading your handwriting. Learning how to write on a computer may take some time and effort, but the result is worth it.

Questions for Analysis

1. Who is the audience for this argument, and what purpose does the writer hope to achieve with his audience?
2. In what sentence does the author acknowledge an opposing viewpoint? Underline it.
3. What sentence states his topic idea? Underline it twice.
4. The writer supplies a number of reasons to back up the claim in the topic sentence. How many reasons does he supply? Number them. Circle the transitions.
5. What examples does he use to explain his reasons?
6. What process does he describe to support his claim?
7. Does the writer anticipate any objections to his argument? If so, how does he address those objections?

The Process of Writing a Persuasive Argument

Write an argument about changing (or continuing) some policy of your school. Assume that you are writing to classmates who are familiar with the policy but may not have the same opinion as you do. Here are some suggestions for topics to address:

- the grading system
- required courses
- food services
- tutoring and academic support services
- parking or transportation
- housing

Gathering the Materials

As you begin to prepare a persuasive strategy, consider what the audience knows—and needs to know—about your subject. Consider how to answer or acknowledge the audience's objections or concerns. Think about the goal of your argument, too. Do you want your readers to consider your viewpoint, or are you making a call for action? Write a preliminary topic sentence that states your claim clearly and directly; let your readers know exactly what you want them to believe or do. Since you're recommending or demanding something, the claim will probably include the verbs *should*, *ought*, or *must*.

Gather and do research on the backing you should provide for your claims. What facts and figures do you know—or where can you find them? What experts or authorities should you cite? You may need to spend some time in the library or on the Internet. Read over the source material more than once to be sure you understand it and can use it accurately.

Organizing the Materials

Once you have gathered your materials, think about the arrangement of your argument. Should your claim appear at the beginning of the argument or, in climax order, at the end? Should you introduce a set of reasons, labeled “first,” “second,” “third,” and so on? Should you support your claim by making comparisons? Or would explaining a process be helpful? Do you need to define any terms or classify ideas? Where would examples be most effective? Should you illustrate an idea with a narrative? Should you quote experts and authorities or paraphrase what they say?

You may wish to outline your argument at this point. Here, for example, is an outline of the model paragraph you read at the beginning of the chapter:



TIPS

For Choosing Transitions in Persuasion

Here are a few transitions signaling different ideas within a persuasive argument:

To concede a point: *of course, surely, naturally, to be sure, no doubt*

To qualify a statement: *perhaps, maybe, possibly*

To predict results or consequences: *therefore, thus, as a consequence, as a result*

To cite an authority: *according to, as . . . says (demonstrates, argues, shows)*

- I. Acknowledgment of discomfort students feel writing on computer
- II. Topic sentence: Writing on a computer has many great advantages.
 - A. Changing or rearranging ideas in first drafts: process explained
 - B. Revising: process explained
 - C. Editing with the spell checker and grammar checker: process explained
 - D. Printing a clean copy
- III. Conclusion: Restatement of topic idea

Writing the First Draft

Now, you're ready to write. Draft your argument, with the persuasive claim stated either at the beginning or end, depending on your persuasive strategy. If you use sources written by others, you may either **paraphrase** your source (that is, restate it in your own words) or quote it (that is, use it exactly as it was written, and put it in quotation marks). Acknowledge your source by stating the author, title, date, and page number.

Revising the First Draft

Once again, let the checklist on page 113 guide you in revising your argument. Answer the questions yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the paragraph to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite the argument.

REVISION CHECKLIST

YES NO

PERSUASION

- Is the argument directed to a specific audience? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Are any counterarguments of the audience acknowledged and addressed? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Is the statement of the claim clear? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Is the persuasive strategy appropriate for the issue and the audience? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Is the evidence convincing and appropriate? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Is the evidence presented in climax order? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Are the transitions clear? ☐ YES ☐ NO
- Does the argument end strongly—restating its main claim or calling on readers to act? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Additional Writing Assignment 1: Make a Recommendation

Recommend a place for your classmates to go—a restaurant, a meeting place, a nightclub, a concert, a library, or any other public place. Argue why they would enjoy or appreciate the place. Assume your readers are neutral toward the subject.

A Student Model Essay

Here's an example of a persuasive essay written by Monica Radu, a former student at Truman College in Chicago. As you read it, notice how it delays its persuasive claim until after a brief introductory story. Notice that its evidence is based primarily on experience.

The Problem with Mathematics

Monica Radu

- 1 "How many sixteenths of an inch are in one inch?" asked the art teacher one day. I sat back, thinking, "What a stupid question to ask! It would be a piece of cake even for a first-grader." Well, maybe for a first-grader, but it did not seem like one for a high-schooler. As the silence persisted, the teacher tried to help: "If you have one dollar and you want to divide it equally among your four friends, how much would you give to each of them?" This was much easier; the students answered right away that it was a quarter. "Very good. Now, why?" The students started to think again. At the very far end, one of them, who figured out that there are sixteen sixteenths of an inch in one inch, was congratulated for being so intelligent.
- 2 Somebody might ask me: Why did I say this problem would have been easier for a first-grader than for a high-schooler? Because the first-grader still relies on his or her common sense to answer it, while the high-schooler, after a long time of a "scientific approach" to life, loses that skill and replaces it with a bunch of formulas. But as he or she knows no formula for the number of sixteenths in one inch, he or she cannot answer.
- 3 This is, unfortunately, a true story that happened in my senior year. I never encountered a problem like this in Romania, where I came from less than two years ago. I therefore want to argue that American schools could learn a lesson from the educational system in Europe.

- 4 During the year I spent in an American public high school, many of my classmates—especially in my science courses—complained about the difficulties they had in applying formulas to situations not mentioned in class. They said they studied for hours, memorized everything, and did all the problems in the book, and yet, when they came to tests and were faced with new types of problems, they didn't know which formula to apply. So what's the use of a formula if the students don't understand the concept behind it?
- 5 I learned concepts back in Romania. Consequently, I never studied at home, never forced myself to memorize formulas, and always did my homework in class the day it was due. But I still got easy A's on tests. I'm not saying this to boast. I was not smarter than the other students and maybe even less persevering. It's just that I knew a better method of learning—that of relying on reasoning, not memorizing. And I must say the method has impressive results. In Romania, by the time students graduate high school, about 25 percent of them have passed Calculus II. And mathematics is only one of the many areas of such accomplishments.
- 6 But how could one expect Americans to use reasoning if they are not taught it? I was amazed to see that teachers here, in America, give hardly any proofs for the theorems they state. It is as if they were saying, "This was discovered by a great scientist, and, as it is written in the book, it is most surely true. The proof is too hard for you, so you don't worry about it." How do the teachers know students will not understand the proof? Why do teachers underestimate them?
- 7 Let me give you a concrete example. During my junior year of high school in Romania, part of the mathematics course included the limits of functions. It was hard, but not impossible, and I did understand them. Next year, I came to the United States and I was taught limits again. What a difference! We weren't even given the real definition; the teacher presumed it would be too difficult for our level. What we got was a made-up, "easier" formula, based exclusively on intuition, something like "it seems that . . ." or "wouldn't it be nice if. . . ." And maybe everything would have been all right if this new method did not have the special "quality" of sometimes getting the wrong answer.
- 8 Considering the present situation in many American high schools, it's not a wonder that many jobs in scientific fields are taken by immigrants who started their education in other countries. It is America itself, through its education system, that robs many of its own people of the opportunity to pursue such careers.

Questions for Analysis

1. Who is the likely audience for this argument?
2. Monica Radu doesn't state her persuasive claim at the beginning of her essay. Instead, she chooses to tell a story that illustrates a problem with the way science and mathematics are taught. What is the problem?
3. Later in the essay, Monica states her persuasive claim quite explicitly. Where does she state it? Underline the statement.
4. What examples does she provide to back up her claims? List them.
5. She also bases much of her argument on comparisons. What comparisons does she make? List them.
6. Does she base her argument primarily on appeals to emotion or reason?

Additional Writing Assignment 2: Argue for a Change in Policy

Like Monica Radu, make an argument for a change in some practice in education, on your job, or in any other area you wish. Assume you're writing to a friendly or neutral audience.

Consider the goal of your argument: Do you want your readers simply to agree with your argument or are you issuing a call for action? Formulate a topic sentence or thesis statement that makes the goal clear. Then consider your persuasive strategy: Should you state the point at the beginning or end of the argument? Decide what kind of supporting information you might include: Should you rely on personal experience, facts and figures, or a combination of the two? Should you back up your claims with examples, comparisons, contrasts, definitions, classifications, and/or short narratives? If necessary, do some research to find facts, figures, and different points of view (indeed, that research might broaden your understanding, modify your ideas—or even change them).

Finally, write and revise your argument.

14 Summarizing and Responding

Summaries and responses play an important role in college writing. In essay examinations and papers, you demonstrate your understanding of material you have read by briefly summarizing its main ideas and explaining them in a condensed form. But you often go beyond merely summarizing the material; you also respond to it. You analyze it, compare or contrast it with other material you've studied, agree or disagree with its ideas, or expand on them further.

This chapter offers you advice on and practice with summarizing and responding by

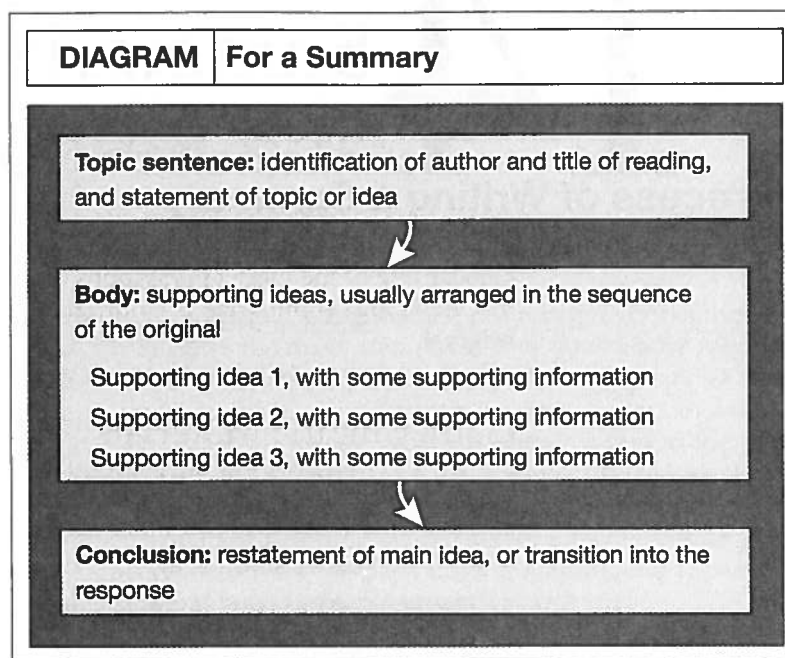
- examining a model summary
- analyzing what makes a summary effective
- taking you through the process of writing a summary
- then repeating the process with a response

A Model of a Summary

Before you can respond to something that you read, you need to summarize it so your reader understands the ideas you're responding to or knows that you understand the ideas as well. If your summary of the material isn't accurate, your response may be inaccurate as well.

As Chapter 7 explains, a **summary** is a shorter version of a longer piece of information; it presents the main ideas or the most important information in a brief way. A summary is also objective: It reports what you have read—with no opinions or interpretations. Therefore, a summary should never include the personal pronouns *I* or *me*. You'll state your interpretations and opinions in the response, which follows the summary. Summaries are almost always written in the present tense.

A diagram of a typical summary might look like this:



The following is a summary of the student model essay in Chapter 12 (pages 107–108). Note that it identifies the source (author and title), includes only the main ideas of the original, and quotes a partial sentence from the original. It establishes a context for the response, which you will see later in this chapter.

What Is Courage?

In "True Courage," Amra Skocic defines *courage* as "an unselfish gesture . . . which involves some risk." The gesture must also be voluntary and involve some personal sacrifice. She cites Oscar Schindler from the movie *Schindler's List* as an example. Schindler is a real factory owner who lives in Nazi Germany during World War II. Schindler acts unselfishly in employing Jewish workers in his factory and protecting them from harm. He voluntarily chooses to protect them and has nothing to gain personally from his action. Furthermore, Schindler risks his own life by protecting the Jews, for he knows that if the Nazis discover what he is doing, they will kill him. Therefore, Skocic argues, he fulfills all the criteria of the definition of courage.

Questions for Analysis

1. Look at the first sentence of the summary. What factual information does it include?
2. How many distinguishing characteristics does Amra list in her definition of courage? List them.
3. Compare the summary to the original. What supporting details are omitted?
4. Is the summary objective? Does it include any opinions or interpretations?

5. Look at the phrase quoted from the original source. How is it used in the summary? How is it punctuated? How does the writer show that he or she has left out some words from the original source?
6. Circle the verbs in the summary. What tense are they?

The Process of Writing a Summary

Choose one of the model paragraphs or student models from an earlier chapter in Unit II and summarize it. Your summary should be much shorter than the original.

Gathering the Materials

An accurate summary must be based on a clear understanding of the material it summarizes. Therefore, you must read the material carefully, and read it more than once. Here's how:

1. **Preview the Reading.** If you're summarizing a chapter of a book or a long article, you may locate main ideas in the headings within a chapter, in the topic sentences of paragraphs, and perhaps in stated summaries at the end of the chapter or article. For shorter readings, look at the opening paragraph, the first sentences of body paragraphs, and the conclusion. These will probably help you identify the controlling idea and the main and supporting points when you begin to read.
2. **Read the Selection Carefully.** Highlight or underline the main ideas and important supporting details. Go over the selection more than once until you're confident you understand it.
3. **Be Thinking about Your Response.** As you plan the summary, you'll probably consider ideas you want to include in your response. Make notes of those ideas.

Arranging the Materials

Now you can select the information to include in your summary. Here's how:

1. **Take Notes and Plan.** Look over the parts you've highlighted or underlined. Then write notes—in your own words—of the ideas you want to include.
2. **Organize Your Ideas Logically.** In most cases, this means following the organization of the original. Begin by outlining the main points in the order in which they're presented.

Here's an informal outline of the summary paragraph you read earlier in the chapter:

DEFINITION OF COURAGE

Unselfish

Involves some risk

Voluntary

Involves personal sacrifice

TIPS

For Beginning the Summary

Here are some phrases for introducing the main idea:

1. In "Title," John Smith states (argues, believes, concludes) (state the main idea)
2. According to John Smith in "Title," (state the main idea)
3. John Smith states in "Title" that (state the main idea)

See Chapter 29 for advice on and practice with using quotations.

EXAMPLE FROM *SCHINDLER'S LIST*

Unselfish in employing Jewish workers in Nazi Germany
Protects them voluntarily
Risks losing his own life, a great personal sacrifice

Writing the First Draft

Now look over your notes and write the first draft. Begin your summary with a **topic sentence** that states the main idea. And, since your reader needs to know what you're summarizing, name the author and title of what you've read.

Write the summary in the present tense since you're explaining what the material *says* now—as you read it—not what the author wrote in the past. Don't copy sentences or parts of sentences from the original. **Paraphrase** the material, using your own vocabulary and sentence structure. Don't imitate the sentence structure of the original, substituting synonyms for a few words. If you do, the summary will be awkward and perhaps ungrammatical, and it won't demonstrate to your reader that you truly understand the material.

It's OK to use short phrases from the original, but you must **quote** those phrases exactly and incorporate them within your paraphrase. Place the quoted material in **quotation marks**. If you leave out words from the original, you can use **ellipsis marks** [. . .] to show where they are omitted.

Revising the First Draft

You'll probably revise both your summary and response at the same time. But we'll focus on the revision of the summary first.

Reread the original material and compare it to the summary. Then use the following checklist as a guide in revising. Answer the questions on the list yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise the summary to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite.

REVISION CHECKLIST

SUMMARY

| | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Does the summary begin with the author and title of the work you have read? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the topic sentence state the work's controlling idea? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Are all the main ideas of the original included in the summary? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the summary objective? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is the summary brief and complete? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the summary avoid copying from the original? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • If quotations are used, are they incorporated and punctuated correctly? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Take notes of these responses to guide your revision.

Further Revising and Editing

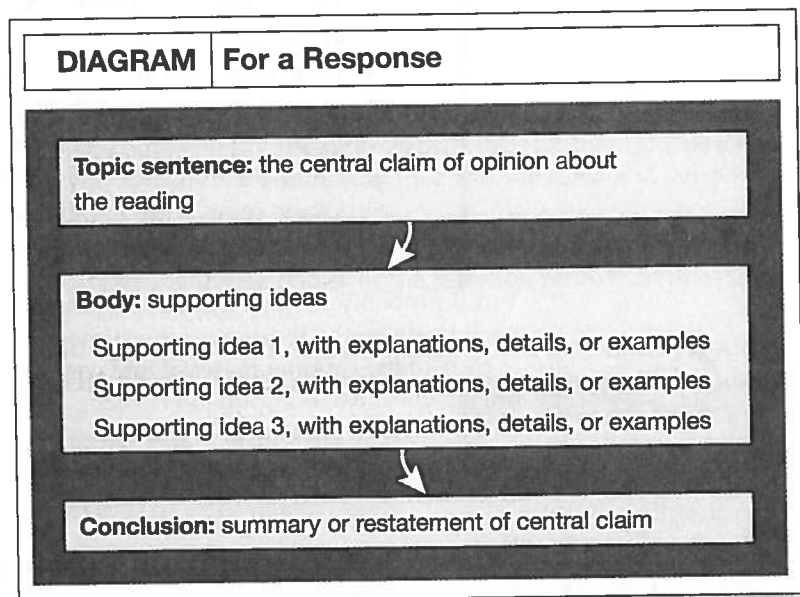
After waiting a few hours or days, return to the summary (and the response) and revise it again.

A Model of a Response

After completing the summary, you can write your response. Unlike a summary, response is **subjective**: It expresses your interpretations, opinions, and arguments.

You may, for example, evaluate how well the writer has achieved his or her goals. You may agree or disagree with one or more claims the writer makes. You may expand on the main ideas of the original reading, comparing it to other readings you've studied in the course. You may relate your own experiences to the material. And because these responses are subjective, you may use the personal pronouns *I* or *me*.

A diagram of a response might look like this:



✓ TIPS

For a Smooth Transition between a Summary and a Response

Restate the name of the author of the reading and the reading's main idea as part of your claim about it.

Here's the response that follows the summary of Amra Skocic's essay. Note how the first sentence establishes a transition from the summary and states the central claim of the response. Note that the second paragraph introduces a second, and contrasting, claim.

- 1 I agree with Amra Skocic's definition of *heroism* and with her selection of Oscar Schindler to illustrate the definition. His actions are especially heroic because of the circumstances in which he chooses to act. When a person risks his or her life to save the lives of others, we surely admire that person's heroism. We applaud the actions of firefighters, police, or ordinary citizens that involve risks to save lives. We call these actions heroic because they fit within our society's shared sense of morality. We know that these people have done the right thing.

- 2 But I think Schindler's heroism is different and more admirable than the heroism of firefighters and the police. He risks his life within a society that opposes and condemns his actions. The official policy of Nazi Germany is to murder Jews, not to save their lives. Therefore, anyone who tries to protect them is acting immorally and illegally. He is a traitor to his country. Yet Schindler acts according to his belief in a higher moral authority, one that rises above the accepted morality of his society. The example of Oscar Schindler therefore seems to argue for an expanded definition of *heroism*. There are perhaps two kinds of heroism: one that corresponds to the society's moral sense and laws, and a second—and greater—kind that corresponds to a higher form of morality and may directly violate the society's laws. This kind of heroism is rare, but is the kind we tend to admire the most. It is the heroism of Joan of Arc, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Questions for Analysis

1. What is the topic sentence of the first paragraph? Underline it.
2. The writer partially disagrees with Amra Skocic. Does he or she think that Skocic is incorrect? Explain.
3. The writer develops the response through a contrast. What two ideas is he or she contrasting?
4. What examples does the writer cite to support the two contrasting ideas?
5. What words or phrases demonstrate that the response is subjective? Circle them.
6. Circle the transitions. Notice how they tie sentences together.
7. Much of the unity of the paragraphs is achieved through repetition of words and sentence structure. Circle the repetition that most clearly establishes that unity.



TIPS

For Labeling Responses

To help your reader distinguish between the author's ideas and your own, label each with introductions such as the following. Notice that your response may use the personal pronoun *I*.

Author: *According to John Smith . . .*

Smith also states that . . .

When Smith says, . . . he is . . .

When no author is mentioned: *According to [Title] . . .*

Yourself: *I agree with Smith because . . .*

I think that [Title] . . .

The Process of Writing a Response

Now write a response for the summary you wrote earlier in this chapter. It should be at least one paragraph.

Generating and Arranging the Material

Review the original reading—or the notes you've already made about possible responses as you were writing your summary. Consider a central claim to develop in your response, and write it in a preliminary topic sentence. List any supporting ideas or examples. Then develop an organizational plan. An outline might help you get control over your ideas. You'll probably want to use **climax order**, moving toward your most important idea.

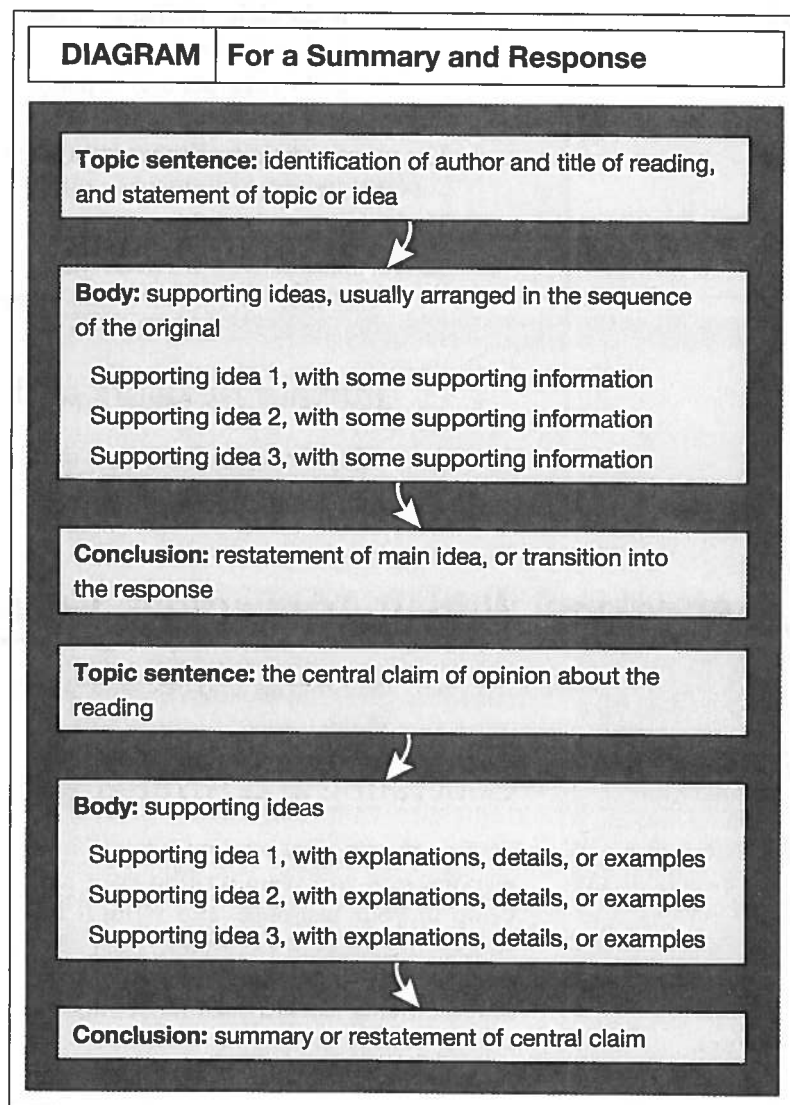
Writing the Response

Now draft a response, beginning with a transition from the summary and a statement of your central claim. Refer to the original in your response. Remember that you're talking about the material you read, not telling your own story!

Here's the beginning of another response to Amra Skocic's essay. Notice its transition from the summary and statement of its claim, which leads immediately into an explanation and a comparison. The writer can then develop and illustrate the comparison.

Amra Skocic defines courageous action well, but this definition doesn't have to be limited to actions involving physical risk. A courageous action can also involve risks to a person's reputation or standing in the community. Both involve potential harm to oneself while benefiting others.

A complete diagram of the summary and response might look like this:



Revising the Response

Now revise the response, using the following checklist as a guide. Answer the items on the list yourself or work with a classmate. If you answer *no* to any question, then revise your draft to correct the problem. First, make changes above the lines or write notes in the margin. Then rewrite.

| REVISION CHECKLIST | | YES | NO |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| RESPONSE | • Does the response begin with a clear transition from the summary and statement of claim? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | • Is the claim well supported with explanations, details, and examples? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | • Is the organization logical? Are ideas presented in climax order? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | • Are the transitions from one idea to another clear? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | • Does the response end by summarizing or tying its ideas together? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Take notes of these answers to guide your revision.

Further Revising and Editing

After waiting a few hours or days, return to the summary and response to revise them again. Make sure they tie together.

Additional Writing Assignment: Respond to a Text

Summarize and respond to one of the additional readings at the end of this book.